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SUCCESSFUL HUNTER

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Successful Hunter® (ISSN 1541-6259) is published bimonthly by Polacek Publishing Corporation dba Wolfe Publishing Company (Don Polacek, President), 2180 Gulfstream, Suite A, Prescott, AZ 86301. Telephone (928) 445-7810. Periodical Postage paid at Prescott, Arizona, and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: U.S. possessions – single issue, \$5.99; 6 issues, \$19.97; 12 issues, \$36. Foreign and Canada – single issue, \$5.99; 6 issues, \$26; 12 issues, \$48. Please allow 8-10 weeks for first issue. Advertising rates furnished on request. All rights reserved.

POSTMASTER: Please send address corrections to Successful Hunter® Magazine, 2180 Gulfstream, Suite A, Prescott, AZ 86301.

Canadian returns: PM #40612608. Pitney Bowes, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2.

WOLFE PUBLISHING COMPANY

2180 Gulfstream, Suite A
Prescott, AZ 86301

Tel: (928) 445-7810 Fax: (928) 778-5124

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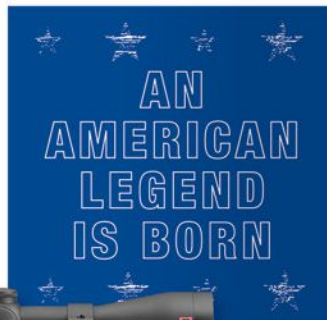
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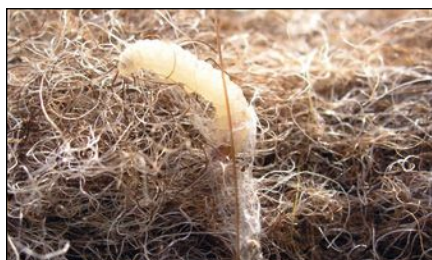


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Trophy Maintenance

Hunters hang mounted game on their walls for a variety of reasons. Very few are of “record book” proportions, and many would be no more meaningful if they were. Most are there, above fireplaces, on office walls or in dens, simply as significant reminders of something unique to each individual: good times with family or friends; hard, laborious physical work; or just faraway places that may never be hunted or even seen again. Whether a kudu, white-tail or moose, trophies are benign enough. To the common man, they are no more or less than three-dimensional memories.

Costly? For certain, but who can put a price on a fond memory? Like photographs, however, mounted game heads don’t last forever. They fade and wither with time and grime, but rarely does their relevance diminish. Mounts are somewhat delicate, and direct sunlight or heat will damage them over time. The real bane of taxidermy, how-



Tineola bisselliella – moth

ever, often goes unnoticed until it’s too late. Bugs!

I am one of those who truly enjoys such mounted memories. So imagine the panic mode upon returning to the office last fall and finding deer hair on my desk. Close inspection revealed more hair on the shelf above the desk and ultimately larvae working its way through the brisket hide of an old Montana



Anthrenus verbasci – beetle

buck. Even then the wretched creatures eating their way across the mount near the antler pedicles and the base of the ears still remained unnoticed.

Tineola bisselliella, *Tinea pelionella*, *Endrosis sarcitrella*, just to name a few, are moths that fall under the “Shredder” category in museum-speak, and they can quickly wreak havoc on a mount. One clutch of eggs is enough. Then there are Shredder beetles: *Anthrenus verbasci*, *Attagenius smirnovi* and many more. All these pests are common, and all of them can and, given a chance, will deposit eggs on a mount. Of course, the eggs turn into ravaging little larvae that will chew up a mount quickly. The trouble is the eggs, hidden in the hair, are so small they usually go unnoticed during long periods of incubation, and once hatched a mount can be ruined before the problem becomes obvious.

“It’s like throwing a match

Imagine this fine assortment of trophy pronghorn ravaged by beetle or moth larvae. Regular cleaning and inspection will help prolong their beauty.





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OBSERVATIONS

on gas-soaked rags,” says long-time friend and entomologist John Hooper. And while the moths usually die after depositing their offspring, some beetles can scurry across from one mount to another and cause large-scale damage.

“The larvae will eat anything with protein in it,” Hooper says. “The hair, skin layers – it’s like dehydrated food. They probably consume some of the hair follicle too.”

Placing the mount in a large chest freezer may help the problem if it is caught early enough, but not all larvae are created equally.

“[Depending on the bug], they may have some equivalent to antifreeze in the egg configuration,” Hooper says. “It’s not to say the egg won’t freeze, but it’s subject to the amount of time and temperature.”

Sans a large enough chest freezer, the Montana mule deer was a lost cause. Even commercial “pest bombs” don’t always work. I tried three over the period of several days, and by the time Forrest Ketner showed up, there were still a couple of larvae wiggling around, though barely, on the deer’s brisket hide.

“I suspect those larvae hatched after you last bombed the mount, but they are barely alive. They



This close-up image shows the pinholes in a pronghorn that have been left behind by insect larvae.



Horned game like this Alaska Range Dall ram are more susceptible to insect damage than most antlered game. Ketner says he finds bugs under the horns of African game more often than North American species.

crawled out, and as they move over the residue left by the bomb, it’s slowly killing them. There could be more that will continue to hatch,” he said.

After consulting a friend who has a sizable trophy room, Ketner was phoned the day the ruined mule deer was noticed and removed from the office. It didn’t take long to realize that he is an interesting fellow. A taxidermist since 1982, Ketner mounted a pigeon at home on his dining room table as his first project. Over time he got more training and opened his own taxidermy shop, and eventually (2000) transitioned into traveling cross-country providing taxidermy cleaning services for well-to-do hunters with massive collections and, by appointment, would also swing by to work on meager collections that include maybe a handful of mounts. Ketner has a base rate for his work, so no man’s mounts are too few. He averages about 180 days on the road and has cleaned trophy rooms as large as or larger than, and including, Cabela’s.

Ketner will tell you up front that he is not an exterminator, and no

doubt would consider his work preventive maintenance. In that regard, he is a wealth of knowledge on maintaining taxidermy.

“What mostly damages mounts is extremes of heat or moisture,” Ketner says. “You don’t want to stick one in a shed where the temperature is 130 in the summer and -20 in the winter. The hide has to go somewhere, it expands and contracts, and it will crack. I’ve also seen mold on mounts because of moisture if a trophy room is shut up without heating or cooling and the humidity gets too high.”

Ketner talked of a moose he once refurbished, and on the side that was closest to a fireplace, the hide on its face had pulled away from the eye about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, but repair work helped.

“Smoke is bad. Cigarettes and fireplaces,” he said. “And grease from kitchens.”

That’s how humans damage or destroy their own mounts, but what about a mule deer in an air-conditioned office?

“The problems are caused mostly by pantry pests,” Ketner says, “the same bugs that we often call weevils

that will eat cereal, dog food and such. There are [perhaps] 700 different varieties.”

Whether or not a mount is susceptible (today they mostly are) “depends on the climate where the mount is, and how the mount was treated from the beginning,” he says. “They used to use arsenic in the tanning solution so it would soak into the hide and hair, and that’s why old mounts seem to last indefinitely.

“In the 80s we used a chemical called Endolan U in the hide tanning process. This wasn’t available very long until it was removed from the market. Endolan U was a moth-proofing agent used in the textile industry. There is no longer anything available to use to tan hides that has a bug-proofing residual effect.”

EPA regulations dictate that hides are now tanned with something much more politically correct – mainly water. Because of that, Ketner suggests mounts be inspected regularly, and kept clean, if for no other reason than to keep an eye out for bugs.

“The biggest thing is to try to maintain your mounts like you

change the oil in your car – some people don’t even dust them,” he says. “Ignoring them is a problem waiting to happen. It’s like a fancy picture on the wall; once you hang it, you don’t give it much consideration anymore. Treat a mount like it’s a piece of furniture – that’s what I always tell people.”

When most hunters think of mount damage, they commonly refer to hair loss. In actuality, says Ketner, he sees more problems with horned game even though a common place for a moth to lay eggs is right around the pedicles of antlers. The fact that pronghorn or sheep or exotic critters with twisted spires reaching above their heads are prime targets makes perfect sense. Horns are made of hair (keratin) and the larvae eat hair, so it’s a natural target for something that would be of more use in a pond full of bluegill. The larvae will even bore right through the horn from the inside out, leaving dozens or hundreds of pinholes in the horn. After that, they just head straight to the hide.

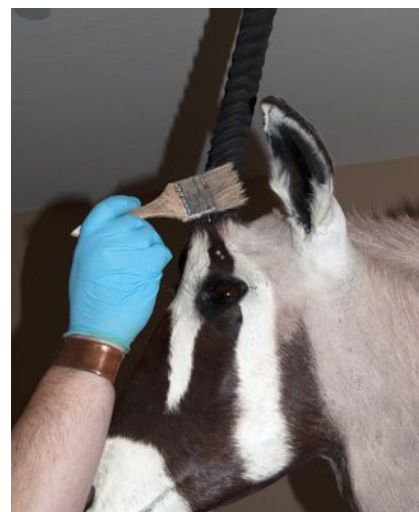
“I see bug damage on horned animals more typically because the moths or beetles like to get inside the horn core [to deposit eggs],” Ketner says. “African game is worse than most, like wildebeest, and it’s very hard to clean under the horns.”

Game with longer hair – like elk or caribou – presents its own challenges. It’s easy for moths or beetles to burrow into the thick hair. Natural velvet left on horns can also be an attractant.

So how can damage be spotted before it gets too far along?

“Usually you’ll notice a sawdust-looking substance below the mount if there is a bug problem,” he says. “It’s [larvae] feces.” (Thanks, Forrest; now I walk around looking at floors, shelves, desk tops . . .)

What I found most interesting about Ketner, however, is his traveling trophy cleaning service, all



Ketner inspects mounts for bug damage, vacuums them, treats the hair or fur with a non-toxic bug deterrent and brushes horns and antlers with a proprietary conditioner.

housed in a bright red minivan. Ketner will come to your house or place of business to inspect and clean mounts. This includes vacuuming them, treating them with a proprietary conditioner/non-toxic pest deterrent (I couldn’t talk him into telling me what it was.), and he’ll polish up horns and antlers with a liquid conditioner that leaves them with a natural sheen (again, secret mix). Ketner can also do minor repair work and paint touch-ups.

By the time all my mounts in the office and at home were cleaned for what, to me at least, seemed like a reasonable price, they looked pleasingly refreshed – all except one half-bald mule deer that has been sitting, now bug free, on the floor in my garage while I contemplate whether to have it remounted with a new cape.

I guess the moral of this story is, “sometimes bugs happen.”

To learn more about Forrest Ketner and his mobile trophy room cleaning service or to purchase his self-published book *Trophy Mount Care*, which includes tidbits such as where not to hang a mount, recommended humidity levels and how to care for your mounts, check out trophydoc.com.



Forrest Ketner, a trained taxidermist, travels the country to prolong hunters’ memories by keeping them clean and making repairs as needed.



Targeting Red Fox

Considerable folklore has been devoted to the red fox's cunning ways. This middling predator has long been revered as a clever trickster and held in high esteem, a sly, devious critter capable of advanced thought and intuition. Examples from ancient Greek fabulist Aesop abound. "The Fox and the Crow," "The Fox and the Grapes" and "The Fox and the Woodsman" pay tribute to the animal's inherent wisdom and calculating behavior. Consult any thesaurus and there are countless synonyms that further glorify this crafty canine – sly, cunning, tricky, sharp, wily and shrewd are common descriptors.

Hunters who pursue this uncommonly astute furbearer say it seems to possess a sixth sense for danger that proliferates its reputation as a capable adversary – using its wit and well-tuned instincts to avoid entrapment. How one minute it might be charging the call but then – for no apparent reason – turns tail and runs in the opposite direction.

But is the red fox sly, as folklore dictates, or is it really just shy and



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cautious, the result of constant persecution by larger predators it competes with for shared resources? It would seem it's a marriage of the two.

First off, make no mistake: Red foxes are clever and resourceful predators, capable of surviving against considerable odds. This is evident in the fact that it, as a species, has been able to endure the

proliferation of coyotes over the majority of its considerable range. Historically, wolves kept coyote populations at bay where they co-existed, and coyotes were not found in abundance throughout the East. But when wolves were extirpated throughout the Lower 48 states – save a handful in Minnesota – this opened up new territories and paved the way for the coyote's storied eastward migration. The result was predictable. As coyotes gained a foothold, red foxes were displaced and forced to occupy habitat niches more suited to their survival, i.e., habitat less suitable for coyotes.

Possessing the intellect and hunting skills inherent to all canines, reds are extremely skillful hunters – their incredible nose, eyesight and instinct make them the most wary of the medium-sized predators. Small rodents and birds make up the majority of their diet, but when food is scarce, they will forage for fruit, eggs and sometimes the carrion of larger animals.



Setting up high with open country downwind will help intercept foxes that are circling the call.

If red foxes are shy by nature (or nurture), paranoid even, it's for good reason. They are often the little kid on the block and must be constantly vigilant or become collateral damage in competition with larger predators. That's why its head is often on a swivel as it approaches the call – usually from downwind. Red foxes have learned to survive confrontation with larger canines through avoidance.

Whether red foxes are inherently sly or shy, or both, it's important to recognize these traits to successfully hunt them.

Where To Look

Successfully hunting red foxes begins with knowing where to find them, and in most cases this revolves around food sources and cover. It can also be linked to coyote distribution within a given area – those areas void of coyotes or habitat niches where the predators' territories overlap. In essence, red foxes have become "townies" where coyotes are present, showing more tolerance for living closer to humans than coyotes. Look for brushy draws, woodlots and sloughs near farms or ranches, or close to towns, and you'll find foxes. Or, target



Red foxes often sleep out in the open during winter. A good technique for hunting them during the day is to drive around and look for them, then devise a stalk using available cover.

areas where coyote numbers are low. Some ranchers – especially sheep ranchers – exercise aggressive coyote control and foxes will fill those habitat niches where coyotes have been eliminated.

Hear this: Foxes circle downwind. Select stands that prevent them from doing so by setting up with an obstruction behind to funnel them out front and into available shooting lanes – a large body of water, an expansive field, a sharp cliff, etc. Either that, or set up on elevated stand locations that provide shooting opportunities downwind.

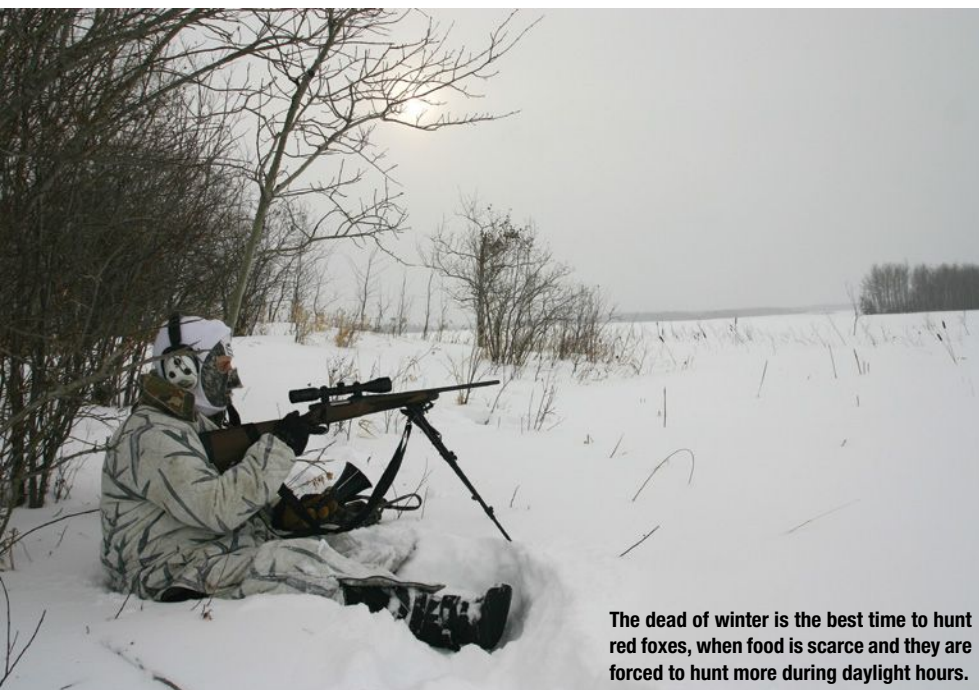
A rock pile, hay bale or a slight hill will provide precious visibility.

Top Techniques

Reds respond to the sounds of prey species in distress because competition for food resources requires it. Imitating the distress cries of prey species using mouth-blown calls and e-callers is the most effective means of triggering this response and getting them in sure-kill close. But it's important to take a gentle approach, because these small canines can be easily intimidated. It's often counterproductive to march into a setup and begin wailing on the call at full volume. Red foxes exercise extreme caution when approaching the call. They know there might be a very protective coyote on the other end of those screams. Begin each sequence using low-volume calls and if nothing shows up, gradually increase the volume.

I typically remain on stand for 20 to 30 minutes to give a fox the opportunity to build up its courage. I've seen them circle downwind a half-mile away or more, using the slightest breaks in the terrain to cautiously approach the call. Buddy hunting works great with foxes, with one hunter positioned downwind while the other does the calling. The downwind shooter will have a

(Continued on page 56)



The dead of winter is the best time to hunt red foxes, when food is scarce and they are forced to hunt more during daylight hours.



Luring Pronghorn into Range

A favorite fall tradition is pronghorn hunting. The experience can be as big or small as a hunter wants it to be. Drive around in a pickup then sneak up on the first thing with horns – not so tough. Hike over hills and glass, looking for something better than average – way tougher. Decoys make that kind of hunting fun.

Antelope are very curious animals, and their social nature makes them want to investigate something, or someone, new in their backyard. When the time is right (usually during the rut) decoys often help cut the distance in otherwise wide-open, difficult-to-cross terrain. Anyone who hunts antelope should own a decoy.

Seasons vary depending on the state. Some open in August while others start in October. I've never had much luck with decoys too early, like in August. Hunting over water or spot-and-stalk are better options that time of year. The antelope rut is typically from mid- to late-September. That's when odds are best to get close. I always carry a couple of decoys in the truck, including a doe decoy, a young buck decoy and a cow silhouette. Decoys that can be purchased work well or a pronghorn hunter can make a



Lisa Armbruster and Brandon pose with Lisa's Texas buck shot at 140 yards using a Browning X-Bolt .243 Winchester and a well-used Mel Dutton decoy.

homemade deer. Years ago, I bow-killed a fine 72-inch buck from behind a homemade decoy in southern Alberta, Canada. Guide Billy Franklin of Silver Sage Outfitters crafted the homemade deer from plywood, painted it and attached two handles on the back. I shot that rut-crazed buck at less than 20 yards as he charged us on September 21.

The silhouette of a black cow has also been used as a shield to close the gap on pronghorn in open country. Mostly, the antelope just stare at the fake cow until you get too close. I've

managed to close within solid rifle range with the cow decoy but never much closer than 150 to 200 yards. It seems better for rifle hunting than archery hunting. Friend and Texas farmer Ty Day used a black cow silhouette last season in the Texas Panhandle to close the gap on a big buck. Angus cows dotted the prairie where a specific lone buck lived. Ty and his hunter closed to 200 yards behind the "cow" shield before the shot was made. The big buck scored 84 inches.

I have more luck with a young

In areas where pronghorn share pastures with cattle, a cow decoy can help a hunter cross open terrain and get within shooting distance.



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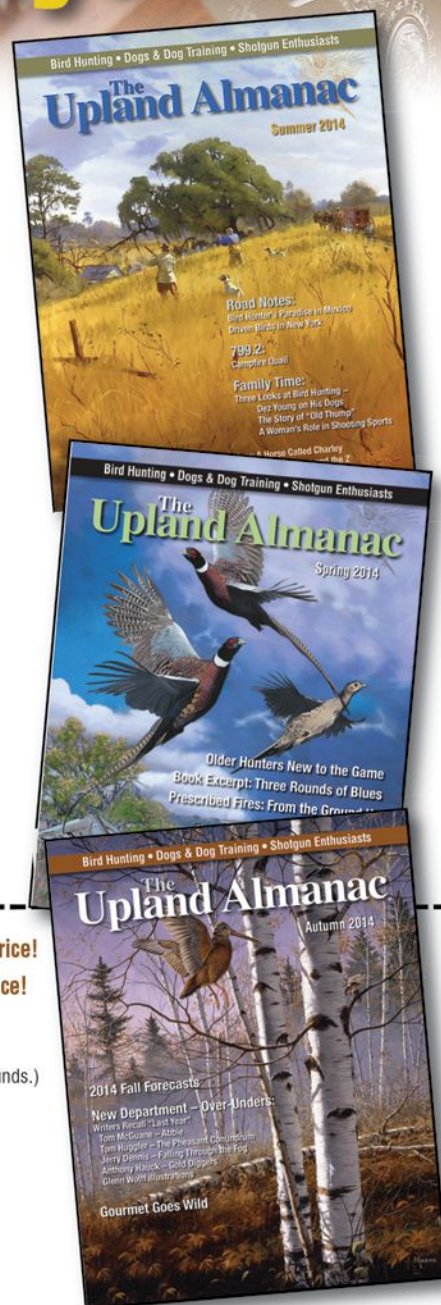
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buck decoy, especially when the real bucks are actively chasing each other and trying to guard does. It works best with one person to hold and turn the decoy and check the distance with a rangefinder while the second person is the designated shooter. This is where a decoy is really deadly. If a dominant buck is guarding a herd of does and suddenly a young, satellite buck pops up within 200 to 300 yards to challenge him, most of the time the herd buck will try to run the small buck away from the does. The action can be fast and intense.

If a third person is present to carry a decoy, adding a doe decoy next to the young buck decoy creates the impression that the new buck has already stolen a doe from the herd master. That can encourage an otherwise docile mature buck to act aggressively.

The strategy is to usually glass a buck from a distance, use terrain to close within 200 to 300 yards then pop the decoy up when the buck is looking away. Eventually, he will turn and see it. Have an arrow nocked, because an antelope buck can cover 200 yards in a snap. One year while hunting with another fellow in New Mexico, we

used a decoy. The first morning we decoyed three different bucks to within 40 to 60 yards. My fellow hunter was so flustered by the charging bucks he emptied his quiver and never cut a hair on any of them. So we went back to camp for more arrows and some target practice.

Obviously, there is some measure of common sense needed when hiding behind an antelope decoy. Do not use it on public land. When using it on a private ranch, make sure any other hunters on the ranch know you are using it and where. Do not use it near a road. For the most part, the places I hunt pronghorn are in the middle of nowhere on large ranches, and the risk of being mistaken for a real buck by another hunter is minimal.

Two seasons ago on opening day in Texas, September 28, Rancher R.A. Brown and I spied a good buck

on a distant mesa with two does. We already knew from observation earlier that morning and the previous afternoon of scouting that bucks were actively chasing each other and fighting over the does. Through a spotting scope, at a distance of about one mile, I could just tell the buck was worth a closer look. So we gathered gear and started to cut the distance on foot. R.A. carried a vintage Mel Dutton plastic buck decoy.

When we slithered behind a screen of mesquites to examine the buck, he caught our movement. I like to get within 200 yards before showing the decoy, but this buck had seen something, and we were not going to sneak any closer. We were still 300 to 350 yards away. The black-faced buck stared our way and let out a challenge chuckle, sort of an antelope's version of an elk bugle. R.A. raised the decoy, and I

Good optics are the key to finding pronghorn bucks in open country, particularly those with better than average horn mass.





A decoy was used to lure this Texas buck into bow range.

chuckled a challenge call back with my voice. Almost instantly, the buck was coming at us like a guided missile, and then disappeared in a ravine between us.

Charging pronghorn bucks typically try to circle to the downwind side. The buck's black horns popped into sight in front of us, bobbing up over the rocky hill. The buck started to swing to my right side, downwind, then hesitated to stare at us at 51 yards. I pulled the bowstring back on a 64-pound Hoyt while R.A. held the decoy. The curious buck just stared at our small Dutton fake as I lined up the pin. (Typically the curious nature of antelope provides a hunter with time to take a calculated, well-aimed shot. Don't rush it.) The skinny carbon shaft smashed through the buck's right shoulder blade, burying the arrow to the fletching.

The buck was stone dead 60 yards down the hill from where it was shot. Its cape was gorgeous, horns massive with cupped prongs and we were done before lunch on opening day! The buck's horns were both a little over 14 inches tall with both tips broken off.

The next day, after our "easy" success, we decided to decoy a cou-

ple other bucks. On two attempts the bucks stared briefly, then turned and trotted away. Decoys don't work every time.

Last October friend Lisa Armbruster got her first pronghorn. After half a day spent bouncing around in the pickup in the northern Texas Panhandle and eyeing a few nice bucks, we found a good one on fair ground. The herd contained six animals: a small buck and another with 14-inch horns and four does. While spying on them from the truck, they wandered into a ravine out of sight. I grabbed the buck decoy, shooting sticks, and we started toward the hidden herd at a trot.

When we crawled up to a yucca to look into the shallow ravine, a doe caught our movement. She stared at the decoy from 150 yards, then trotted up and over the hill, taking the others with her. Lisa and I duck-walked behind the decoy to the next hill. Again, the herd stood and stared for maybe 30 seconds at 200 yards. As I was getting the tripod-legged shooting sticks set, the herd trotted out of sight again.

Not wanting to give up, we duck-walked another 300 yards and then I spotted black horns over the top of a

prairie dog town. We crested a small berm and sat on our knees behind the decoy in the hot, afternoon sun. The whole herd stared from 200 yards away, then slowly they started to walk closer out of curiosity. Eventually the big buck stood facing us at 140 yards. Lisa caught her breath, steadied her rifle, then shot him in the white of his chest with a .243 Winchester, sending a Nosler 85-grain Partition right on target.

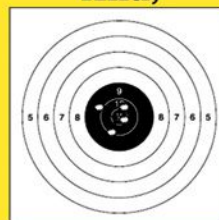
The buck stumbled and trotted about 40 yards and tipped over. The rest of the herd just stared as we approached the fallen buck from behind the decoy shield. Finally, the survivors ran away in a cloud of dust as the sun dipped low on the horizon. Lisa's first buck gross-scored about 73 inches.

No, decoys don't work every time, but when they do, the experience is memorable.

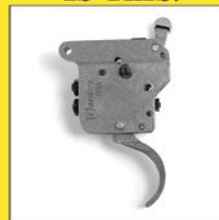
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.25-06 Remington



As this old photo shows, John has been using the .25-06 Remington for years – all the way back to 1975, in fact. It remains a useful big game and varmint cartridge when loaded with proper bullets.

The .25-06 Remington has kept the .25-caliber alive. Only a few years after the .250-3000 Savage was introduced in 1915, experimenters necked down the .30-06 case to hold .25-caliber bullets. The original wildcat was called the .25 Niedner and withstood the current of time for decades in custom-built rifles, despite Remington introducing its .257 Roberts in 1934 and Weatherby its .257 Weatherby Magnum in 1944. Eventually the cartridge was just known as the .25-06, and its regard continued to grow to the point that Remington took it under its corporate wing in 1969. Today the .25-06 Remington is the only .25-caliber cartridge chambered by all major rifle manufacturers and currently stands 16th in popularity among cartridge reloading dies sold annually by RCBS.

That popularity among handloaders is well deserved for a variety of reasons. For one, a wide selection of bullet weights and styles make

the .25-06 Remington excellent for hunting ground squirrels to coyotes and antelope to elk. Those bullets can be matched with numerous powders to produce velocities required for a given task. Manageable recoil allows shooters to take advantage of its accuracy and long-range capability.

My wife bought me a Ruger M77 .25-06 Remington in 1975. The first few seasons I handloaded Sierra 100-grain flatbase bullets for the rifle. With a maximum amount of IMR-4350 powder, the bullets had an estimated muzzle velocity of 3,300 fps to create what was surely the ultimate flat-shooting cartridge.

With that confidence, I placed the scope's crosshairs with a sliver of daylight above the back of a mule deer buck near the top of a dis-

tant ridge. At the shot, the buck stumbled into a line of trees and never came out. I crossed the creek, climbed the ridge and crossed the deer's trail, which showed a trace of blood in the snow on both sides of the prints. The buck lay under the



The .25-06 spent its first 50 years as a wildcat cartridge found only in custom rifles. As a factory cartridge for the last 46 years, thanks to Remington, it is far and away the most popular .25-caliber cartridge.

trees with a hole through the top of its heart and out the far side.

However, the Sierra bullets wreaked an excessive amount of damage at close range on deer shot in the timber and antelope in broken country. The only one I recovered was from an antelope, and it was mashed flat. To reduce blood-shot meat, I switched to 120-grain bullets. Plus, elk had started showing up in the mule deer country I hunted, and they required bullets that held together for deeper penetration. Not all 120-grain bullets are created equal, however. I shot a mule deer buck at 40 yards with a Winchester 120-grain Positive Expanding Point bullet from a factory load. It disintegrated on its neck, failing to even break the deer's spine, and I had to shoot it again.

Speer Grand Slam and Nosler Partition 120s are much sturdier bullets, and over the years I shot four elk with them. Two were shot with Noslers and two with Grand Slams. The elk stood broadside at no more than 80 yards and were

These four bullets make the .25-06 Remington a versatile cartridge. From left: Hornady 75-grain V-MAX, Sierra 100-grain GameKing, Barnes 100-grain Triple Shock and Nosler 120-grain Partition.



.25-06 Remington Handloads				
bullet (grains)	powder	charge (grains)	OAL (inches)	velocity (fps)
75 Hornady V-MAX	A-4350	56.5	3.19	3,508
	IMR-4320	42.0		3,032
	W-760	55.0		3,685
85 Nosler Ballistic Tip	RL-7	33.0	3.20	2,759
	H-4895	41.0		2,937
	IMR-4320	47.0		3,333
100 Barnes Triple-Shock	RL-17	53.0	3.16	3,441
	Retumbo	60.0		3,235
100 Sierra GameKing	Hunter	55.0	3.13	3,302
	IMR-4831	56.0		3,321
	Hunter	55.0		3,405
	IMR-4350	53.0		3,275
120 Nosler Partition	IMR-4350	49.0	3.19	3,023
	H-4831	54.0		3,078
	Magnum	60.0		3,176
	RL-25	58.0		3,233
	H-1000	55.0		2,911

Be Alert: Publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors in published load data.

shot tight behind their shoulders. The bullets went clear through the elk. One of the elk fell over on the spot, but the others gave no immediate indication of a hit, like a sideways flinch or jump. They just walked 30 yards or so and collapsed.

Skeptics would say that shows the .25-06 Remington is marginal for game the size of elk, and that bullets must be placed exactly right. They no doubt declare the same about the .270 Winchester shooting 130-grain bullets. Both cartridges, how-

ever, have a respectable record when shot with the Grand Slam, Partition and other good bullets. The .25-06's firm footing does slip in open country where 300-yard and farther shots are the norm. Hunting in such country expressly for elk, I switch to a cartridge shooting heavier bullets, like a 7mm magnum or .30-06. But even when carrying those rifles, I make the utmost effort to crawl as close as possible to place a bullet exactly right.

Because of the variety of bul-

(Continued on page 53)



The .25-06 Remington is probably most popular as an antelope rifle but works fine on deer, and even elk with 120-grain bullets that are designed to penetrate.

America's Bolt Action

The Springfield defined modern hunting rifles.





John's 1930's customized 1903 Springfield with a Lyman Alaskan scope (bottom) is a fine example of how Springfields set a standard for modern American bolt rifles like the 2008 Winchester Model 70 .270 Winchester with Swarovski variable scope above it.

By John Barsness

Americans came late to the bolt-action rifle. While several designs were tested in military trials and issued in limited numbers during the 1870s, the single-shot .45-70 “trap-door” Springfield and Remington rolling block served as our primary military rifles until 1894. By then several world armies had switched to Mauser and Mannlicher bolt-action repeaters chambered for smallbore smokeless cartridges, most loaded with 5-round clips, and even the conservative British used the .303-caliber bolt-action Lee-Netford, forerunner of the Lee-Enfield, with a 10-round detachable magazine.

America's Bolt Action

When the U.S. Army finally adopted the Krag-Jørgenson bolt action and a .30-caliber smokeless cartridge, the rifle couldn't be clip-loaded so was already obsolete. They also didn't issue Krags very quickly. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, a number of U.S. soldiers still carried trapdoor Springfields, while the Spanish used clip-loaded 1893 Mausers. (The U.S. won the war despite our rifles, through major advantages in naval power and troop numbers.)

During the same period, some American hunters used single shots, but most used lever-action repeaters, almost all with tube magazines. It wasn't until the late 1890s that the 1895 Winchester and 1899 Savage finally featured stacked magazines. (The Savage was even – *gasp!* – hammerless.) Meanwhile, hunters in Europe were switching to bolt actions.

Why this divergence? One theory involves our frontier: During the period right after the Civil War, the



This 1903 Springfield, made by Frank Pachmayr in the 1930s, is a classic example of a between-the-wars sporter, with both a Lyman receiver sight and a Lyman Alaskan scope in a Griffin & Howe side-mount.

country west of the Mississippi held far more Indians and grizzly bears than European-Americans. There weren't many general stores, so most people lived off wild game. Westerners wanted a rifle they could "load on Sunday and shoot all week," and the tube-magazine lever action filled that need.

In contrast, Europe had been settled for centuries, so hunters didn't have to defend themselves from other



The outside-hammer, tube-magazine rifle is uniquely American, and many hunters used one like this 1886 Winchester reproduction long after the rest of the world switched to bolt actions.



One reason American hunters preferred the Springfield for sporting conversion was its more graceful magazine assembly (left), compared to the 98 Mauser bottom metal (right).

hunters or big bears. Even in Africa and India, European colonists preferred double rifles for dangerous animals, and bolt actions for use against smaller game and warlike natives, though some upper-class settlers sneered at repeating rifles and often used natives to carry their extra ammunition, rather than carry it themselves in the tube magazines of Winchesters. (Some may have wished they had a Winchester when their ammo-carrier ran away from a charging lion.)

By the 1890s the frontier had disappeared, and we started to emulate Europe. The Krag was replaced within a decade by a new bolt action, the 1903 Springfield, though once again the U.S. military couldn't come up with an American design: The 1903's action was mostly a Mauser copy with minor features borrowed from the Krag. Mauser sued over several patent infringements, and the U.S. had to pay royalties, though payments were suspended during two world wars.

Some hunters immediately started using 1903 Springfields, and its new .30-caliber cartridge, a close imitation of the 8x57 Mauser, worked very well on North American big game. The original army round used the 220-grain roundnose bullet of the Krag, but in 1905 Germany introduced a new 8x57 load using a 154-grain spitzer (pointed) bullet at 2,880 fps. In 1906 the U.S. once again followed their lead, switching to a 150-grain spitzer at a similar velocity, and the .30-06

Springfield was born, eventually becoming a worldwide hunting round.

Many gunsmiths started using Springfields as the basis for sporting rifles, the most famous undoubtedly "the little Springfield" Theodore Roosevelt used on his 1909-1910 safari in East Africa, put together by the Springfield Armory. However, it was actually his second Springfield sporter. The first, also an Armory rifle, was ordered in 1903 during Roosevelt's first term as president. According to *The 1903 Springfield Rifle* by Leroy Thompson, Roosevelt used this first rifle to take over 300 big game animals.

The second most famous early Springfield sporter belonged to Stewart Edward White, a popular writer who hunted Africa twice, the first time shortly after Roosevelt. (He knew Roosevelt, who said White was the best marksman, with both pistol and rifle, who ever shot at Sagamore Hill, Roosevelt's Long Island estate.)

White had his Springfield restocked by gunsmith



Many European hunters had already switched to bolt actions before World War One, mostly 98 Mausers (left) and Mannlicher-Schoenauers (right).

America's Bolt Action

Ludwig Wundhammer, still known by some students of the rifle for the “Wundhammer swell” on the side of the pistol grip, designed to positively position the shooter’s trigger hand. White found the full-jacketed military load a “far the more effective” bullet on African game than “old-fashioned soft point bullets.”

Both Roosevelt and White published popular books about their safaris, and by 1912 Winchester’s head designer T.C. Johnson had worked up a bolt-action sporter. The action, by some coincidence, bore a strong resemblance to both the 1898 Mauser and 1903 Springfield, and among the chamberings was a new cartridge called the .28 Winchester Center Fire. Essentially a necked-down .30-06, the bullet wasn’t 7mm as we know it, instead measuring .287 inch in diameter.

This ad for Sedgley Springfields appeared in the December 1939 issue of *American Rifleman*, and the ad for \$29.95 mail-order 1903 Springfields in September 1963.

Winchester’s plans also involved selling the rifle in Europe, however, where bolt-action hunting rifles were already popular, and World War I started before the project got off the ground.

In 1915 the Springfield Armory began offering a standard sporter

version of the 1903, sold to members of the National Rifle Association. Production of the NRA Sporter ceased in 1917, when the U.S. entered the war, but by the war’s end in late 1918, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers had grown very used to bolt actions,



These three rifles clearly show the influence of the 1903 Springfield on commercial American hunting rifles. Top to bottom: a recent Model 70 Winchester Classic, a Model 54 Winchester and a Sedgley Springfield.

thanks both to the 1903 Springfield and 1917 Enfield.

The Enfield was yet another semi-imitation of the 1898 Mauser, designed by the British military when it wasn't sure Lee-actioned rifles were going to work out. Along with its new Pattern 1914 action, the British intended to introduce a rimless cartridge, but World War I forced them to stick with the .303. When the war started, Britain desperately needed more rifles, so U.S. companies started making P14s and in 1917 started chambering them in .30-06 for use by U.S. troops.

The 1903 Springfield, however, was definitely the rifle that sold American hunters on bolt actions. Mausers were German in origin, not popular after the war, and could vary in quality due to being manufactured all over the world. Springfields were only made in U.S. military armories.

Plus, 1903s were easily converted to sporters without changing the barrel from the already popular .30-06 chambering, though, of course, some people did. Unlike most 98 Mausers, the floorplate didn't have extra locking screws next to the action screws, and the trigger guard was more gracefully formed. This was an important consideration in those days before custom rifles were regularly fitted with after-market "bottom metal" costing as much as a new factory rifle.

The 1917 Enfield did have a couple of advantages for sporting conversion, since unlike the Springfield, the bolt handle and safety worked fine under a low-mounted telescopic sight. But the Enfield also had an aperture sight inside a pair of huge steel "ears" integral to the rear of the action, and the ears had to be ground off and the action recontoured if a scope was mounted. Plus, like the British Lee-actioned rifles, the Enfield cocked on the closing motion of the bolt, requiring a decided push against the strong firing-pin spring. The 1903 Springfield

cycled easily, because, like the 98 Mauser it copied, spring compression was mechanically divided between opening and closing the bolt.

After the war several major American companies started producing bolt-action hunting rifles. The first was Savage's Model 1920, and Remington brought out its Model 30 a year later, using tooling for the 1917 Enfield for the action. Winchester finally finished up its prewar project

in 1925, introducing the Model 54, though the .28-caliber cartridge was transformed into a slightly different round called the .270 Winchester Center Fire.

Even with all the new commercial bolt actions, converting Springfields into sporting rifles became a regular business. One problem was the so-called "low-number" 1903 Springfields. Early actions were heat-treated and casehardened, just

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like Krag and 98 Mausers, leaving the interior of the action steel relatively soft but flexible and the outside very hard. With a little use the bolt ran very slickly, due to work-polishing of the hard surfaces. The actions were proofed at 70,000 copper units of pressure (CUP) and worked fine.

During the stepped-up production of the war, however, some actions were accidentally hardened all the way through, resulting in very brittle steel. Ammunition brass was also sometimes defective, and the cupro-nickel jackets of the bullets of the time built up rapidly in bores, often enough to increase pressures. As a result, some wartime actions blew up.

This led to immediate changes, at first in heat-treatment and eventually in the steel itself, but ever since shooters "supposedly" have risked their lives when firing any Springfield Armory rifle with a serial number less than 800,000 and Rock Island rifles under 285,507. In reality, the vast majority of low-number Springfields were heat-treated correctly and worked fine, and quite a few were reheat-treated either by the government arsenals or private gunsmiths.

One company in Philadelphia, owned by Reginald F. Sedgely, got



The transition to bolt actions eventually included even the smallest centerfire rounds. The Winchester Model 1892 .25-20 (top) was made in 1913, but by the 1930s Savage also chambered its Model 23 for the .25-20.

into business by buying cheap low-number Springfields and annealing the actions. Sedgely not only made semiproduction Springfield sporters with original government .30-06 barrels but fancier models rebarreled to cartridges as small as the .22 Hornet.

Decades ago a magazine article appeared, written by somebody who supposedly ran into an unnamed man at a gun show who claimed to have worked for Sedgely, and he described the annealing as incompetent. I don't think such hearsay would be published today, but when the subject of Sedgely Springfields comes up, this old article is often quoted. The late Michael Petrov, perhaps the greatest American collector of Springfield sporters and

author of two well-researched books on early custom American bolt-action rifles, never could find an instance where an unmodified Sedgely failed. One that did had been "bubba'd" by numerous extra holes drilled in the receiver to mount a scope then fired with an extremely hot load. (Overloads sometimes blow up old rifles, but the rifles themselves usually get the blame, instead of whoever loaded the ammunition.)

During the years between the world wars, fine Springfield sporters were considered absolutely top-line by American hunters. The most famous was the rifle delivered to Ernest Hemingway in 1930. It was based on a barreled action selected by Col. Townsend Whelen, by then Director of Research and Development at Springfield Armory, and converted by the new company formed by Seymour Griffin and James Howe. (Howe had been head gunsmith at Frankford Arsenal when Whelen was in command in the early 1920s.) Hemingway's Griffin & Howe Springfield remained his primary big game rifle until his death in 1961, taking hundreds of animals from elk and grizzly bear in North America to kudu, lion and rhinoceros in Africa.

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The 1903 Springfield action (bottom) was a close imitation of the 1898 Mauser (top).

The 1903 Springfield and its quick-manufactured World War II version, the 1903A3, once again became very important hunting rifles in the years after the war. The U.S. military had been switching to autoloading rifles since the first M1 Garands were issued in 1936, and hundreds of thousands of war surplus Springfields were sold on the civilian market. Another thriving business grew up around home “sporterizing” of 1903s, and several companies supplied sporter-style stocks that could be fitted and finished by garage gunsmiths.

When I started hunting in the early 1960s, surplus Springfields could be mailed-ordered for as little as \$30, a quarter the price of any commercial bolt action .30-06. Several of my father’s friends hunted with home-converted 1903s, and the first deer I ever saw killed was shot by one of those friends. I couldn’t afford a genuine Springfield until more than a decade later, however, finding a used one in a sporting goods store for, if memory serves, \$195. That was still a lot of money for a college student, equivalent to around \$750 today, but all the sporterizing work had already been done, including drilling and tapping for a scope mount, a new bolt handle and a halfway decent job of fitting a sporter stock. I slimmed

down and refinished the stock and mounted a K3 Weaver, using the rifle over the next few years.

Since then I’ve owned four other Springfield sporters, including a Sedgely and another home-job based on a 1903A3 barreled action, but the ultimate desire was one of

the between-the-wars sporters, with a scope in a Griffin & Howe side mount, backed up by a receiver sight.

I never could find an affordable Griffin & Howe with anything other than really plain wood but one day at a gun show found a Springfield with spectacular walnut and Frank Pachmayr’s name on the barrel. Originally a .35 Whelen, it had been converted to .358 Norma, which made sense when the Whelen was a wildcat and the Norma wasn’t. I handload it to .35 Whelen ballistics with 250-grain bullets and have hunted with it some but have not yet taken any game.

That will have to be fixed, perhaps during this spring’s black bear season. In the meantime, thousands of other American hunters have taken plenty of big game with actual and spiritual descendants of the bolt action that weaned many of our forefathers from lever actions.



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Baited Bucks

Scatter corn . . . shoot deer. If only it were that easy.

Does may congregate around feeders about any time of day. Old, mature bucks usually show up at last light.

By Brandon Ray

On the 10th sit of the season for the tall-racked, typical 10-point whitetail, I'd done everything right – got in the blind well before daylight, was careful about human scent and was silent. Most importantly, the wind direction was good. The symmetrical, 145-class buck was on the trail camera almost daily, but killing it was proving to be very difficult.

The first visitor was a young, basket-racked 8-point.

He stood under the corn feeder at 18 yards offering every shot angle. Next, a dink 4-point joined him for the free corn. The youngsters made this seem too easy. It's rarely easy.

Both the young bucks popped their heads up and stared to the north. Standing statue-still was the regal 10-point, 150 yards away, watching the feeder like he was paranoid. Mature bucks, by nature, always are. With a bow in my hands, he was a lifetime away, and eventually he decided he saw enough, twitched his tail and melted back into the cedars to the north.

Little did I know at the time, it would require 10



more long sits at that same blind, spread across two months, hunting only when conditions were right, before my luck would change. This was a buck that by any definition was more visible than most, and it lived in an area that receives almost no hunting pressure. But he wasn't easy.

Some hunters say baiting is unfair. They say guarding a pile of corn, grain or apples or whatever is too easy. In my experience, it is not. To kill *any* deer? Yeah, that might be called easy. But to target a specific, mature buck? That is never easy.

So what is bait exactly? Before judging the way oth-

ers hunt, think of your own setup. I've sat on the edge of crop fields in the Midwest and had deer stream by at point-blank range. Is that hunting bait? I've hunted under windmills in warm weather and sniped deer at close range. Was that unfair? I've lured bucks past my tree stand with the sweet, ripe scent of an estrus doe poured from a bottle. Is that considered bait?

To most hunters, bait would mean sitting over a man-made attractant or pile of feed that attracts game – whether stale donuts for black bears in Alberta, alfalfa hay and grain in the woods of Saskatchewan for a white-tail or a timed corn feeder for deer in Texas, it's all the

Baited Bucks

same. (Baiting is not legal in every state, so always check state regulations before doing it.) Since it's all the same, and with so many foes attacking hunting in general these days, hunters should band together, not squabble about how we hunt in different parts of the country.

Hunters who discredit using "bait" rarely factor in all the time and effort someone puts in to putting that feed there and making things seem so "easy." In my home state of Texas, hunting over corn is as much a tradition as turkey for Thanksgiving or exchanging gifts on Christmas. Every year, I log dozens of hours filling corn feeders and feed troughs, replacing batteries, repairing solar panels, wiring hog panels, checking trail cameras, buying and hauling feed from the store to the ranch and on and on. It's hard work. A



A bag of corn may seem inexpensive, but filling feeders through the summer and fall certainly isn't.

lot of man hours go into every sit over bait. On top of that, raccoons and hogs can clean the free food before the deer get it.

Mature bucks are instinctively more alert around bait. They often circle the perimeter for any whiff of human stink. Your blind better be well concealed, or they will spot your movement. I hunt my feeders or bait stations very sparingly, and only when the wind direction is favorable. I check trail cameras and re-fill the feed at midday when the deer are bedded elsewhere. Put too much traffic or pressure on any bait area, and big bucks will stay away or visit in the dark.

There are benefits to hunting over bait: Most of the time, you get ample

time to scrutinize an animal before taking a shot. On properties that manage strictly for big bucks, that's important since shooting a buck that is too young is a sin. If it briefly walks through a window in the brush, and you have to make a snap decision, it's easy to screw up and shoot a buck that is too young. When hunting on bait with a good view of the feed area, there is usually more time to judge age and size.

Hunting over bait is an effective way to reduce doe numbers. More animals congregated in a given area, like around bait, means more targets. That's important in areas with too many deer. In areas with thick brush, where seeing *any* deer is an achievement and deciphering deer patterns is difficult due to the thick woods, bait makes it more feasible to see those secret deer. That's *more feasible*, not easy.

Last fall I shot two bucks, both with corn in their mouths. Both hunts were on private land. Between scouting with a spotting scope, filling and maintaining feeders, checking trail cameras and actual hunting, about 40 days were invested for those two filled tags.

I targeted two specific, mature whitetail bucks. Both were familiar faces I'd seen the year before, and both were seen often near a corn feeder. A trail camera placed close to the feeder often caught both bucks' pictures. That is usually misleading. A hunter assumes because a buck's picture is on a trail camera, it's just a matter of sitting there and shooting him. Not so fast. The camera does not show the mature buck's pattern to circle the feeder and blind before coming in. Put a hunter in the blind and that same buck that is on camera more often either does not appear, although he is probably somewhere close and knows you are there, or he circles out of range. Mature bucks know they are



Lots of hunters find it perfectly acceptable to hunt over a water source but despise the idea of using other "bait."

vulnerable around such setups. To assume it will be easy to kill one is foolish.

It was the change in weather that made me go to a tripod stand by the river on October 15. A cold front blew through the previous day, bringing gusty, 20- to 30-mph winds from the north and a drop in high temperatures of 20 degrees. The morning of the 15th broke cold with a low in the 40s and wind chills in the 30s. It had been two weeks since I'd hunted that stand by the creek. It was time to try again.

I made the long, afternoon hike down the canyon to the tripod stand at 5:45 P.M. Shortly after climbing aboard, six gobblers tempted me at 20 yards. I let them walk. At 6:45, a good buck appeared up the draw 100 yards to the north. Cautiously, it came my way until it was posing at 20 yards. I recognized him from the previous year. In low deer density areas like that river corridor in the Texas Panhandle, you get to know specific bucks because there are not that many. The previous year he was about the same size, and I saw him several times.

His rack had long tines but a narrow spread. I thought about it for a long while, but decided, at 4½ years old, he needed more time. Maybe if it rains next spring his rack will make a big jump in size. He was gone a short time later, and I was instantly starting to question my decision.

At sunset, 7:11, two deer were spotted up the river, headed my direction. Through a 10x Leupold binocular I could see the lead buck was the one I'd seen before the



Even hunters who use bait spend many hours each season scouting for deer – not to mention the mileage they put on their pickups and the associated cost of fuel.

season through my spotting scope and on trail camera pictures. A mature 8-point with matching kickers on his G-2s, he was coming on a string with a small 4-pointer trailing him.

For the longest time he would not give me the right shot angle. Finally, at 7:26 with daylight fading, he turned at 18 yards. My Hoyt drove a 400-grain carbon shaft tipped with a solid 3-blade VPA Terminator



A mature buck approaches a corn feeder at last light. Old bucks typically circle feed areas looking for any hint of danger, and then they come in to feed during the last 30 minutes of light.

Baited Bucks

broadhead into his spine, dropping him instantly. A follow-up shot through the ribs ended things quickly. When I got to him, the emotion that hit me strongest was respect. This fine buck had survived through epic droughts, bitter winter storms and evaded coyotes for five or six years. It was a humbling experience.

The buck's live weight was probably around 200 pounds. His main-frame 8-point rack carried one extra kicker off the left side base and a measurable kicker off both G-2s, an 11-pointer. He had long beams, 25 inches. His longest G-2 measures about 12 inches. Counting the extras revealed 150 inches of antler.

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Brandon shot this big main-frame 8-point on his birthday, over a feeder.

Did I mention I shot the buck on my birthday? That was a first, if memory serves me.

Now back to where this story started: I had one fine whitetail in the freezer for the year as a birthday gift, but going into late December, the symmetrical 10-point was still proving elusive despite lots of hours spent hunting him. I'm hard-headed, so I kept after it, even when I was exhausted and wanted to stay home by the fireplace on cold days instead.

Christmas Day started with 6-year-old Emma wide-eyed and bouncing like a ball toward the lit tree. Amy and I staggered to the living room in the predawn hour while Emma shredded presents like a tornado, and she made out like a bandit.

By lunch, the girls were exhausted – me too, but I decided it was a good afternoon to hunt by the river. The girls took a nap while I snuck away to the cottonwoods on that winding Panhandle creek, making it to the stand by 3:00 P.M.

The first visitors were 17 turkeys, all fluffed up in the biting cold, pecking through the alfalfa hay for kernels of corn. I let them walk. It was 4:20 P.M. when I spied a deer to the north coming at a trot. Through the binocular, I thought it was a doe, but it looked too big. When it

got to bow range, I could see two bloody circles on the deer's head. It was a buck that had already shed both antlers! As I watched him at 20 yards through the binocular, I spied an antler lying in the green hay by the feeder! Unbelievable. It was an old 8-point I'd only seen from afar through a spotting scope until that moment. Now here he was, for the first time ever, less than 20 yards, with no antlers!

Two more small bucks showed up around 4:45. Both of them were familiar faces. It was 5:00 P.M. when I spied antlers 200 yards to



Some hunters spend hours each year sifting through trail-cam images looking for mature bucks that may or may not be using a specific feeder.



Christmas Day buck: Following 40 days of sitting on stands last season, waiting for the right opportunity for the right deer, Brandon arrowed this buck at a feed station at last light. (The photo was taken the following morning.)

the north. A good buck was headed my way, and through the 10x glass I could see it was the tall-tined 10-point I'd been chasing all season.

When he turned at 20 yards, I pulled my bow to full draw. My muscles were cold and did not want

to work. I dropped the string and the buck went straight down. Another arrow to the ribs ended things quickly.

The buck had lost a noticeable amount of weight since his peak back in October, maybe 40 or 50 pounds.

I remember watching him wildly chase a doe back in November. No wonder he was skinny. His rack had 10 symmetrical points with 23-inch beams. The right side G-4 had about 2 inches busted off. The rest was perfect. He was perfect. A rough score of its rack revealed it to be in the low 140s. I saw six different bucks that afternoon and no does.

I was so thankful to get that buck. Effort and commitment finally paid off. Nothing about that hunt was easy. The memories and the rack were great, but the meat would feed us throughout the year. Emma rode with me the next day when we hauled the buck to the local meat processor, only after I promised her a Blizzard from Dairy Queen if she went. She will do anything for a Blizzard.

It only took 40 days of hunting for those two "easy" bucks. In my experience, hunting over bait is never easy!






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—Tag in the Bag—

Beating the Nonresident Western States License Lottery





It's easy to draw or purchase a nonresident elk tag in Colorado, but hunting pressure is high. Units with low tag quotas also have fewer hunters. Inset: Wyoming is a top state for nonresident pronghorn hunters. Tags in many units can be drawn without preference points.



By Jack Ballard

Compared to many other outdoor recreational pursuits, hunting is a bargain, at least for residents of most western states. For less than the price of a one-day lift ticket at Montana's Big Sky Resort, a Treasure State hunter can enjoy hunting elk, deer, black bear and upland birds, with fishing privileges thrown in. Even with the cost of a state lands recreational stamp added, the total is still less than one day of skiing – \$95 versus \$103. Big-game hunting is much more economical than other forms of entertainment. Colorado residents will spend more on a single adult ticket to watch the Denver Nuggets play basketball in a decent seat than they will to hunt deer *and* elk in their home state.

Tag in the Bag

Beyond the arbitrary geographical boundaries that define your home state, however, the game changes dramatically. A nonresident moose tag in Colorado costs \$2,009, not to mention the investment in preference points and application fees (we'll get to those later) hunters with normal luck will spend before plunking down cash for the tag. A 2014 nonresident elk tag cost \$826 in Montana; \$577 or \$1,057 in Wyoming, depending on the chosen license tier; and \$604 in Colorado. The same nonresident elk tag in Idaho may have appeared a bargain at first glance at \$417, until a would-be applicant realized the tag required the purchase of a prerequisite hunting license at \$155. In most western states, required stamps, application fees and other "add-ons" will increase the price of a big-game tag by 5 percent or more.

Despite considerable investment, many hunters purchase a nonresident big-game license. The prospects of hunting new country, dropping a trophy animal or simply pursuing quarry unavailable in one's home state makes the sticker-price worthwhile. But, like buying a cell phone, knowing what's actually needed for a functional product and understanding the "fine print" and long-term financial obligations are critical to customer satisfaction.

Buying a resident big-game hunting license is usually as easy as making the purchase and figuring out which unit in which to hunt. Nonresident licensing is usually much more complex. For the purposes of this article,



Trophy game may be more productively hunted in places other than one's home state, but the best bucks are often on private land.

we'll confine observations and recommendations to the states of Colorado, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, the states with which I am most familiar. The basic principles and process in these states are similar to others.

Application Deadlines

With the exceptions of over-the-counter and leftover nonresident licenses, application deadlines for big-game hunting normally occur months before hunting seasons open and may vary widely in relation to species. For example, deadlines for nonresident hunters in Wyoming occur January 31 for elk, February 28 for moose, bighorn sheep, bison and mountain goat, and May 31 for antelope and deer. March 15 is the deadline in Montana for elk and deer; other deadlines occur May 1 (bighorn sheep, moose and mountain goat) and June 2 (antelope). Deadlines are easy to miss. Many veterans of the nonresident licensing lotteries prepare and submit all their applications early – and at once – to avoid a forgotten deadline.



The northern Rockies hold fine whitetail bucks and copious opportunities for general tag hunting.

Preference Points

Most western states allot all or substantial portions of nonresident big-game tags via some preference point system. Preference points weigh drawing odds in favor of applicants who have attempted to draw a license for a particular species over time. Preference point systems vary from state to state but can be categorized in one of two ways.

In a “true preference” system, all applicants who have a higher number of preference points are given a tag before any applicants with lower points. For example, a hunter researching mule deer units in Colorado may find it takes three preference points to draw a tag. This means every applicant with four points who applies will be given a tag before any applicant with three points. Those submitting applications with three points will draw before those with two, etc. In a true preference system, the required points publicized in application materials may not be completely accurate. In a unit with a tag allotment of 10 and an advertised minimum preference requirement of three, the drawing may be skewed higher if a couple of applicants with six points become disillusioned with waiting and jump into the pool.

From year to year, however, applicants in a true preference system can make a highly reliable assessment of their drawing odds based on preference points. Last year, my wife drew a general elk tag in Wyoming with two preference points. Based on research of previous drawings, we knew she had very high odds of pulling the tag with two points. With three points, a tag would have been assured.

The upside of true preference systems is their high



Southwestern Montana (where this bull was killed) offers fine elk hunting on a general tag. Most districts allow either-sex hunting for a portion of the season.

level of predictability. It’s also their downside. Drawings exist in some states with true preference systems for coveted tags such as trophy elk and bighorn sheep units which require more than 15 preference points to be assured a tag. In some Wyoming bighorn districts, the quota may only be a half-dozen tags. If there are several hundred applicants in the preference point pool already, the new applicant who dutifully acquires a preference point every year will literally die (even if he lives to be 100) before having any chance of drawing a tag through the preference point system. To entice hunters into the drawing, most states with true preference point systems offer some percentage of the tag quota that is offered in a random drawing in units with Draconian preference



Idaho and Montana nonresident elk and deer tags have not sold out in the drawing in the past few years, partly due to the belief wolves have killed everything, making a “last minute” nonresident hunt an option for those unable to commit months in advance.

Tag in the Bag

requirements. However, odds in the random portion of these drawings seldom exceed 1 percent. True preference systems work well to award persistent applicants in places where five or fewer points are required to draw tags in units with reasonable allotments. Higher point requirements and tight tag quotas are a dead-end for new applicants.

To award persistence in a drawing, other states offer a “bonus point” system. These protocols increase an applicant’s odds of drawing a tag over time by upping his or her chances in the drawing. Some states award an additional bonus point for each successive year an applicant has applied. In these systems, a hunter with a five-year history of applications would have five chances of drawing a tag versus a single

Wyoming pronghorn tags are easy to draw and are comparatively economical when compared to other western states’ fees.



chance for the first-year applicant. In Montana, as well as some other states, bonus points are squared, greatly increasing drawing odds over time. I have 13 bonus points for moose, giving me 169 chances (13x13) in the tough drawing.

Whether a true preference or bonus point system, hunters are generally required to opt-in to the system and pay a fee for the point. Some states have realized that preference points are a lucrative source of revenue from nonresidents. Annual nonresident preference point fees in Wyoming are \$50 for elk and \$40 for deer. In 2014, Colorado ramped up its preference point fee to \$40 per species. When estimating the true cost of a nonresident tag, it is critical to account for preference fees. If it takes four points to draw an elk tag in Wyoming, the applicant will have \$200 into the process before paying for the actual tag and other required fees, bringing the total cost of the license to somewhere around \$800 versus the current advertised price of \$591.

Special Versus General Tags

Nonresident deer and elk hunters often have the choice between “special” or general tags. General tags can be used in any hunting unit open to general hunting under the conditions of that district. Special

tags, sometimes called “limited-entry,” “draw-only” or “controlled-hunt” tags, allow permit holders to hunt in a single hunting unit or group of units. Special tags are typically used to regulate harvest of trophy animals or encourage harvest of females to control populations. In some states, securing a general license allows the permit holder to enter drawings for special tags. Such is the case in Montana. Nonresidents who secure a license in the deer, elk or combination deer-elk drawing are allowed to enter a subsequent lottery for special tags.

The number of nonresident general tags is normally allotted on the basis of a statewide quota. The number of nonresident special tags is usually regulated as a percentage of the overall quota in a particular district (10 percent in many states). Thus, if a mountain goat district in Montana offers 12 tags, nonresidents are eligible to draw one of the tags. Although a certain percentage of tags is available to nonresidents, this doesn’t mean that number is guaranteed, merely a maximum allowed amount. In the above Montana scenario, nonresidents can draw up to one goat tag, but all the available licenses might be drawn by resident hunters.

One of the difficulties of playing the nonresident game involves com-



Remote locations in hunting units without grand reputations may hold trophy animals and may be easier to draw a tag for.

mitment. With application deadlines looming months before the season opens, nonresident hunting seems sensible only for those with enough predictability in personal and professional schedules to plan a hunt far in advance. Eating a \$600 elk tag due to a job change isn't a pleasant prospect. However, current demand for general deer and elk tags in some states, most notably Montana and Wyoming, takes the pressure out of preplanning. For the past several years, neither state has had enough applicants in the drawing to sell out its nonresident tags. Hunters who want to hedge their commitment to a nonresident hunt to a matter of weeks or days instead of months can buy a general tag in these states as a leftover long after the drawing.

Special tags may also go begging, though never in trophy units. The special tags most commonly allotted in a second drawing or sold on a first-come, first-served basis after the



Bighorn sheep tags are highly coveted but extremely hard to draw in any western state. Look to Idaho for some of the best nonresident odds.

drawing are antelope tags in units with high populations but mostly mediocre bucks, or tags for antlerless animals. Hunters who miss or avoid the commitment of the months-away application deadlines are advised to look to Wyoming for later opportunities. The state's un-

sold special tags become available for purchase in mid-summer and typically include opportunities for antelope and mule deer buck hunting, along with copious numbers of antlerless tags.

It is easy to assume that special tags are the ticket to a superb nonresident hunt, but such isn't always the case. Elk are notoriously snow-hardy animals, but deer and antelope populations may contract severely after a bad winter, with older-age bucks often succumbing in high numbers. The effects of a tough winter may not be known prior to the application deadline. If a hunter has accumulated enough preference points to finally draw a tag in a trophy district on the heels of a horrific winter, big bucks may be in short supply. A general tag usually means lower odds of trophy animals on the whole, but better odds of a reasonable place to hunt if Mother Nature turns her back on animals in particular places.

Mastering the intricate and ever-changing demands of nonresident licensing systems involves a commitment of time and effort. Knowing how each state administers its licenses and making intelligent decisions about where and how to apply is the first step to snagging a tag that results in a satisfying hunt.

Northern Rockies Opportunities

Looking to snag an appealing nonresident tag in Colorado, Idaho, Montana or Wyoming? Here are some general trends to consider. Do some homework to hone in on the hunting unit and species of your choice.

Colorado: There's near-limitless opportunity for nonresident elk hunting via liberal special tag quotas and over-the-counter licenses good for several units, but expect to see many other hunters afield. Mule deer tags are the current gem, where all mule deer hunting is conducted on a draw-only basis. Reasonably conservative quotas for antlered deer mean an older age (3-year-old plus) buck can be taken in virtually any unit. Patient hunters who scour habitat not easily accessed may find a real trophy no matter the unit. cpw.state.co.us

Idaho: This state has a bad rap when it comes to wolf predation. It's true that its deer and elk herds took a beating at the fangs of *canis lupis* in some areas in the early 2000s, but the state's aggressive wolf hunting and trapping seasons have helped curb their numbers and game populations are responding. Find a unit with good deer or elk populations and low wolf numbers (information is available online) and expect a good hunt. Idaho also offers some of the finest nonresident drawing odds for bighorn sheep, mountain goats and moose. fishandgame.idaho.gov

Montana: Elk hunting is downright good in southwestern Montana, where hunters in most districts can opt for a bull or cow on a general tag. Trophy elk hunters might consider special license districts other than the Missouri Breaks and Elkhorn Mountains, where drawing odds are abysmal. Better drawing odds and burly bulls are available in virtually all of the draw-only elk districts in Region 4. Deer populations in the once-fabled Missouri Breaks took a beating during the severe 2010-11 winter but are rebounding nicely. Habitat in the Breaks with tough access should produce some trophy bucks in the coming years. fwp.mt.gov

Wyoming: This is *the* place in the northern Rocky Mountain states to hunt pronghorn. The north-central part of the state boasts a robust population with easy access to lots of public land. At \$272, a nonresident Wyoming antelope tag is a bargain (application and other fees brings the price to about \$300). There is no better place to cut your teeth on nonresident hunting than with a Wyoming antelope tag. wgfd.wyo.gov

Newton's . Masterpiece

Savage's .250-3000 is one of the great hunting cartridges.

By Terry Wieland

Charles Newton was many things: By profession he was a lawyer, but his passion was ballistics. He was a brilliant cartridge designer, a visionary who recognized the potential of high velocity and a man whose name should have been in lights. Alas, Charles Newton was both a poor businessman and an unlucky one. His rifle company floundered because of the First World War, the proprietary cartridges bearing his name faded from sight, and Newton's masterpiece, one of the greatest American hunting cartridges of all time, is known to history by several designations, but none contain the name Newton.



Savage Model 1899 E, circa 1922.

Newton's Masterpiece

This great cartridge is the .250 Savage, originally known as the .250-3000. It was the first commercial American cartridge to reach 3,000 feet per second muzzle velocity, and it set the stage for everything that came after, from the .270 Winchester onward.

Contrary to most reports, the .250-3000 was *not* the first commercial cartridge to reach that velocity (3,000 fps), only the first one designed in America. The British .280 Ross preceded it by several years. Nor did the .250-3000 spring wholly formed from Newton's fertile brain. He was inspired by, and followed in the footsteps of, several other men, including Sir Charles Ross and A.O. Niedner.

None of that should take away from Newton's landmark accomplishment. The .250-3000 became the mainstay of Savage Arms for the next 50 years. It inspired a host of other cartridges, some designed by Newton himself, and others by Niedner, Ned Roberts, Phil Sharpe, Winchester and Remington. The .250-3000 also established an unsailable standard: After 1915, 3,000 fps was the benchmark for any cartridge claiming to be high velocity.



The class of 1906-15, from left: .30-06, .280 Ross, .250-3000 and .256 Newton.

In studying cartridge developments before 1920, several critical factors must be remembered. The first is the limitations imposed by early smokeless powders. They were fast-burning by today's standards, which restricted many cartridges in fact, even though they were possible in theory. Their case capacity was too great, or the powders were too fast – the situation known as “over-bore capacity.”

There is no scientific definition for over-bore capacity, but there is a practical one: When a case holds more powder than can be burned in a bore of its size, then it is over-bore. What's the point of taking a cartridge like the .30-06 and necking it down to .25 if you can then fill it only partly full of the available powders without driving pressures over the limit? That is precisely what happened when A.O. Niedner first created the .25-06 around 1920.

So in 1914, when Savage Arms commissioned Charles Newton to design a new cartridge for the Savage Model 99 lever rifle, he was working under several constraints. One was the overall length of the action, which was short compared to the military Springfield. It also lacked the camming power of a bolt, so the case needed noticeable taper to prevent jamming in the chamber. Finally, there were the powder limitations.

In the decade preceding 1915 (the accepted year of introduction for the .250-3000), several notable cartridge developments had taken place. In the United States, in 1906, the .30-06 was adopted by the military and its ballistics finalized with a 150-grain bullet at 2,700 fps. That became the American performance benchmark.

Around the same time, in England, Sir Charles Ross unveiled his .280 Ross, a 7mm semi-rimmed car-



Savage's progression to high velocity began with the .303 Savage (left) in 1895. It was one of the first smokeless powder smallbore hunting cartridges. It was followed in 1911 by the .22 Savage High Power (center) and finally the .250-3000 in 1915. Both the .22 and .250 were designed by Charles Newton.

tridge that achieved the unheard-of velocity of more than 3,000 fps. In any other age, the .280 Ross would have been tagged a magnum. Its velocity was achieved because Sir Charles had connections and was able to persuade du Pont to produce an entirely new slow-burning smokeless powder, No. 10½.

Combined with the Ross straight-pull rifle, Sir Charles was on his way to revolutionizing target shooting, big game hunting and military rifles. This was the standard Savage faced as it sought a high-velocity cartridge for its Model 99.

The Savage Arms Company was no stranger to either velocity or hype. Beginning in 1895 with the introduction of the .303 Savage, one of the first (some argue it was *the* first) smallbore smokeless commercial cartridges, Savage had promoted the astonishing effects of high velocity on game. In 1911, the company followed it up with the .22 Savage High Power designed by Charles Newton. Based on the existing rimmed .25-35, the .22 High Power launched a 70-grain bullet at 2,800

fps, and Savage then sponsored hunters to travel the world, putting the cartridge through its paces.

The Model 1899 lever action was Savage's one and only big-game rifle. To Americans, the lever was still king, and Savage's design, with its enclosed frame and side ejection, was the last word in "modern." Savage cartridges were all designed to fit into the relatively short 99 action.

At the time, the only commercial bolt actions were rifles from Europe, including Mannlichers, commercial Mausers and sporting rifles built on earlier military designs like the 1893 Rumanian Mannlicher. These were fine rifles, but expensive. In America, the first tentative steps were being taken to build sporting rifles on the Springfield action, but they were still a long way from commercial reality.

Savage realized it had an opportunity to create, and dominate, an entirely new field of hunting rifle: The smallbore, high-velocity cartridge – home-grown, inexpensive and highly effective. This was Charles Newton's assignment, and the cartridge that resulted was the first really modern commercial cartridge. It was based on the .30-06 case, but only the head and base dimensions were the same. The .250-3000 was rimless, with less than normal case taper and a sharp shoulder. If it were introduced today, it would not be out of place.

Charles Newton believed the ideal bullet weight in a .25 bore was 100 grains, and he designed his case to use that bullet. The intended velocity was 2,800 fps. Savage management, however, decided otherwise. With an eye on the .280 Ross and the publicity it was getting, they wanted a cartridge they could boast reached 3,000 fps. The way to do that was to reduce bullet weight to 87 grains. Having done



The .250-3000 was designed to be a perfect fit for the somewhat short Savage 99 action.

so, they christened the new cartridge the .250-3000, and it set out to revolutionize the shooting world.

The cartridge's career was interrupted by the First World War, which delayed its general adoption. When the war was over, however, other rifle manufacturers looked at it, liked it and started chambering rifles for it. It was offered in the Winchester Model 54 and, later, the

Model 70, and the bolt-action Savage Models 1920, 40 and 45. R.F. Sedgley of Philadelphia chambered custom Springfields for it. It was a natural for the commercial Mauser *Kurz* (short) action and was chambered both in Europe and in custom rifles built in the United States by companies like Griffin & Howe.

As it had with both the .303 Savage and .22 High Power, Sav-

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Newton's Masterpiece

age Arms promoted hunters who roamed the world, shooting large and dangerous game with the new rifle. Roy Chapman Andrews took one to Asia and hunted tigers. These exploits were trumpeted in Savage's advertising. Group photographs of deer camps from the 1920s often show 10 or 12 hunters, all carrying Savage 99s. If you hunted deer with a .250, you were a serious guy.

This was only the surface story. Although the .250-3000 swiftly established an excellent reputation as an eastern big-game rifle, Savage had unwittingly built some limitations into its cartridge. First, the standard rifling twist was one turn in 14 inches. This would stabilize an 87-grain bullet but nothing heavier. As well, the company built rifles with barrels as short as 20 inches, which

Evolution of the .25, from left: The .25-20 and .25-35 were developed around 1893. The .250-3000 was introduced in 1915, followed by the .25-06 wildcat around 1920, and the .257 Roberts in the mid-1930s. The .25-06 was severely hampered early on by the absence of slow-burning powders.

reduced velocities significantly, sometimes to the point where even the 87-grain bullet could not be stabilized dependably.

Later, Savage switched to a 1-10 twist, although exactly when and with which models is unclear. In 1971, when it reintroduced the .250-3000 in the 99, it used a faster twist, but older models may be one or the other – or even 1-12. Because 1-14 was the early standard, even custom bolt rifles may have the slower twist. Measuring the twist rate in a rifle should be the very first step in developing an accurate handload.



In 1933, Peters Ammunition Company bowed to Charles Newton's wishes and added a 100-grain load to its line. Newton, unfortunately, did not live to see it, having died a year earlier. Other ammunition companies followed Peters'

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lead, but the lower-velocity, heavier bullets soon proved inaccurate in many rifles, except those with either longer barrels or faster twists. Since serious riflemen wanted both velocity and pinpoint accuracy from a cartridge like the .250-3000, this was a big strike against it.

Also, by the 1930s, the swing to bolt rifles was well underway. A.O. Niedner had developed the .25 Niedner (generally known as the .25-06) and Ned Roberts was busy developing his .257 Roberts, a .25-caliber cartridge based on the 7x57 case necked down. In both cases, the goal was to achieve higher velocities with heavier bullets.

The .25-06 was over-bore capacity and did not come into its own until 1940, when IMR-4350 made its appearance, and to a degree, the .257 Roberts suffered from the same problem. Today, of course, both cartridges can be loaded to achieve the magical 3,000 fps with bullets ranging from 100 to 120 grains.

None of these later developments detract from Charles Newton's achievement. With the .250-3000, he revolutionized North American big-game hunting, and his influence spread to Europe as well.

Even given the limitations mentioned above, the .250-3000 proved to be an extremely effective big-game cartridge. Jim Carmichel, one of the most experienced and knowledgeable riflemen/hunters of the modern era, once wrote that the quickest and "deadest" he ever saw a bull elk fall was to a .250-3000. In the minds of most, elk would be pushing it, especially with an 87-grain bullet, but properly placed it certainly does the job.

After 1945, however, the .250-3000's fortunes began to wane. Many of the rifles for which it was originally chambered were not resurrected after the war. The passion was

super-accurate bolt rifles and ultra-velocities. New cartridges came along and old ones fell by the wayside.

The most devastating blow for the .250-3000 came in 1955, when Winchester introduced the .243 Winchester. It was short enough to fit the Savage 99 action, new, and it got rave reviews. The .243 and its parent, the .308 Winchester, were added to the 99's list of chamberings and in 1961 Savage discontinued the .250-3000. The move brought howls from many lovers of the .250, and in 1971 Savage relented and reintroduced it in the remodeled Savage 99. It was only a gesture. Within a few years, the .250-3000 was gone for good, and not long after, Savage discontinued the Model 99 altogether.

As often happens, once it was gone, many rose up clamoring for its return. Most gun companies, however, learned long ago that bowing to such demand rarely pays off. What people say and what they are willing to pay for are two different things. In losing the .250-3000, however, the shooting public has lost a cartridge for which there is no real replacement.

Jack O'Connor, writing in 1964, said that he considered the .250-3000 to be superior to the .243 Winchester in several ways, especially as a big-game cartridge. It has a sharp crack but little recoil and performs out of all proportion to its size. It is adaptable to small, light, compact rifles that are ideal for many types of hunting. For the backpacker or still hunter, a light, handy .250-3000 is a dream rifle.

None of these factors are likely to bring it back, but the .250-3000 still has admirers, and those admirers tend to grow in number — every time someone shoots a .250 for the first time and realizes what a little gem it really is.

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Free-Range Wood Bison

Hunting North America's
Largest Game Animal

By Brad Fenson

While sitting in a restaurant in town, outfitter Kevin McNeil cocked his head sideways to quietly point out a gentleman walking in the door. He was a weathered man and walked with a slight limp that he hid quite well. McNeil had told us about a local hunter who was gored and trampled by a bison bull the previous winter. Deep snow acted as a cushion when the bison tried to pound him into the ground, or he'd likely be dead. After being gored in the groin, the man still managed to locate his rifle and kill the bull. It was the type of story one might expect to read in a Peter Hathaway Capstick paperback about Cape buffalo in Africa, when in fact, it was about North America's largest hoofed animal – the woodland bison.

The wood bison is not only the largest land animal in North America, it is also as agile as a cat and as fast as most prairie animals. They have lots in common with Africa's feared buffalo and sport the same attitude and explosive temper. Meet one in the wilds, and you have equal odds that it will charge or retreat into cover. Either way, it only takes a matter of seconds. Booking an early spring hunt with McNeil created excitement that can only occur when hunting something as dangerous as





Free-Range Wood Bison

you. I've seen hundreds of wood bison in national parks and wanted to face off with a free-ranging bull.

We were in the extreme northern reaches of Alberta, Canada, right against the Northwest Territories' border. Camp was a fancy fifth-wheel parked alongside a main highway. With virtually no access roads in this remote part of Alberta, we would access the bison's territory by riding quads along backcountry trails, hunting along the borders of Wood Buffalo National Park. It is one of the largest parks in the world at a sprawling 17,300 square miles.

The park was established in 1922 to protect one of the last free-roaming herds of wood bison in North America. The park is primarily boreal forest perched on the edge of the Canadian Shield, with extremely productive areas along the Peace/Athabasca Delta. At one time there were close to 170,000 wood bison in Canada, but current populations are estimated at around 10,000, with about 25 percent in Wood Buffalo National Park. At any one time, a quarter of that population can wander outside park boundaries.

The unique hunting opportunity that exists around the park is due to early management decisions involving bison. In the early 1800s there were literally millions of



Hunting camp consisted of a fifth-wheel trailer, and hunters used ATVs to access the remote woodlands where the bison roamed, as much as 10 miles or more from the nearest pavement.

bison in North America. Hunting, tough winters and possibly disease knocked bison to the brink of extinction, leaving a few captive herds in the south and remnant populations in the far north. At the time there was some debate about differences between plains and wood bison as separate species, as many believed they were all the same. It is now clear the bison in the south were the smaller plains bison. At their all-time low, there were less than two dozen in Yellowstone National Park and



A massive woodland bull is the largest animal in North America.

Hunting Opportunity

Woodland bison hunting is open to residents and nonresidents of Alberta in an area known as a “bison free zone,” where the animals no longer have wildlife status. There are no seasons, limits or license requirements and wildlife managers want bison in the area removed so they don’t wander to neighboring herds of disease-free, purebred wood bison. The areas where bison range outside of Wood Buffalo National Park are very specific and remote, meaning knowledge of their movements is critical to success. Kevin McNeil of Blue Sky Outfitters (blueskyoutfitting.com) has been hunting these bison for years and knows how to access prime habitat, find bison and deal with them once on the ground. This is a true free-range wild bison hunt and a one-of-a-kind experience.

a private herd of less than 100 owned by Tribal Chief Michael Pablo, also in Montana. In addition to that, several hundred wood bison roamed free in northern Alberta.

The remaining herds in Montana grew, and in 1906 the Alberta government purchased 700 plains bison from Chief Pablo. The animals were put in an area established as Buffalo National Park, where the Camp Wainwright Military Base now exists, in east-central Alberta. Within 14 years the herd grew too large for its habitat, and animals were culled until public outcry forced the relocation of animals north to the newly established Wood Buffalo National Park.

The area they were released into was the same area where the only remaining true strain of wood bison still existed. The animals from Wainwright were plains bison and suffered from tuberculosis and brucellosis, but at the time the diseases were only thought to affect older animals, so only younger bison were moved. The introduction of plains bison threatened the only pure strain of wood bison left and brought with it disease issues.

Ironically, Wood Buffalo National Park was created in 1922 to protect the last remaining herds of wood bison in northern Canada, but the transplanted plains bison threatened genetic purity. Plains bison were shipped to the park from Wainwright, Alberta, between 1925 and 1928. The imported bison promptly moved south of the park to the Peace River and Peace/Athabasca Delta area. In 1926 the park boundaries were expanded to include this new bison range. The different habitat preferences of plains bison and wood bison within the park was the only saving grace. Today Wood Buffalo National Park



Wood Buffalo National Park was established specifically for the protection of the bison. When they roam out of the park, residents and nonresidents can hunt them in specified zones.

protects one of the largest free-roaming, self-regulating bison herds in the world.

The transplanted bison threatened the only remaining pure strain of wood bison left in North America. Both hybridization with plains bison and the threat of disease could’ve wiped out the woodland bison, but once the mistakes were realized, biologists went looking for genetically pure bison that were disease-free. The enormous area of the park allowed bison to live in separate populations, and a herd of purebred animals in a remote area was identified. Those animals have been used to reestablish pure wood bison populations in other parts of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska.

Today there are pure strain wood bison in northern Alberta and in southern regions of the Northwest Territories. The animals in Wood Buffalo National Park are theoretically a cross between wood and plains bison. These animals, especially young bulls, will travel incred-



Brad glasses for woodland bison that may have left the national park. Even as massive as they are, they aren’t all that easy to see through the hardwoods.

Free-Range Wood Bison

ible distances to find their own territory and breeding cows. It would not be difficult for animals to travel to adjacent herds even though they are hundreds of miles apart. Therefore, the Alberta government allows the hunting of bison directly outside Wood Buffalo National Park at any time of the year.

There are no specific licenses required, and all a hunter technically needs is an Alberta Wildlife Certificate. It would be extremely difficult, however, to just go find bison in the large expanse of wilderness, which is where Blue Sky Outfitters comes in. McNeil has intimate knowledge of the areas through which the bison migrate and travel in the spring, and he has the equipment to set up camp and access the game.

Traveling north with longtime friend Kevin Howard, we wheeled into camp late in the afternoon and received an update on conditions from McNeil. In early May nights were icy cold, and by mid-afternoon water would be flowing on the access trails. Travel would be tricky, but the extra effort worth it. We'd

have to travel at least 10 miles from camp before getting into bison territory. Bison are huge creatures and one would think they'd stick out like a sore thumb. Truth be known, they can hide as well as a white-tailed deer, and when they want to stay invisible, they do. Our plan was to travel as much as needed to find fresh tracks, sign or bison.

The area we hunted was extremely flat, meaning water has no place to flow until the ground thaws. There would be lots of wet biking. There also were natural meadows where the bison could graze or bed in the sun. The rivers and creeks were barriers for us, but the bison would simply wade or swim them with ease. The hunters in camp the week before played hide and seek with several bison herds without ever seeing one. There were fresh bison tracks in the quad tracks daily, but the hulking big animals remained out of sight.

The first morning the crisp air had a bite to it, and I was forced to zip my jacket up over my chin. It didn't take long to find the water, and we meandered across sections of ice, sometimes breaking through and dropping the quads off balance. The riding was challenging

but fun and adventuresome at the same time. We rode for close to an hour before stopping at a small clearing. McNeil pointed to an area where he'd historically seen bison. The dense forest made it difficult to see any distance at all. We started to see bison tracks on the trail and knew we could bump into one at any minute.

A narrow strip of forest bordered the edge of a larger river, and my curiosity to look down the bank forced me to signal our guide. When he stopped, I motioned that we should look over the bank, and we did. A short walk through the trees opened up an incredible vista giving a view of large stretches of the river in either direction. It was an incredible time to be in the boreal forest with ruffed grouse drumming and swans trumpeting their intentions to push farther north. The whole area was alive with a variety of ducks, geese and sandhill cranes flying up and down the waterway.

It was the big tracks that pushed up the mud on the banks that caught my attention. Bison had been crossing the river and pushed their way through the mud like a bulldozer in low gear. I had trouble picturing an animal the size of a



This watercourse clearing provided a great view while glassing long stretches of shoreline for bison on the move.



While this photo may look a little silly, the outstretched arms of Brad and his buddy Kevin Howard make it easy to see just how big a mature wood bison really is.

Volkswagen Beetle swimming the frigid waters, but they do regularly.

It was becoming more apparent that timing would be critical to success. Our winding trail only provided short sight intervals of 100 yards. The river was a great bet, if only there was a regular crossing. Locals had told me that bison are

continually on the move and always like to travel with their nose to the wind. In other words, they could be anywhere at any time, and the best way to score on this monstrous woodland creature was to put in lots of time and stay alert.

We were about three hours from camp and rounding a bend in the trail when McNeil jumped off his quad and pointed into the trees. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the hulking mass of a huge, old bull. Its hide was still wet, almost to the top of its back, from just swimming the river. I pulled my rifle from the case and chambered a round before taking a first step. The bull was 60 yards away, staring at us with discontent. McNeil made no bones about the bull being a shooter, and I could tell by the excitement in his voice we wanted to get this bull.

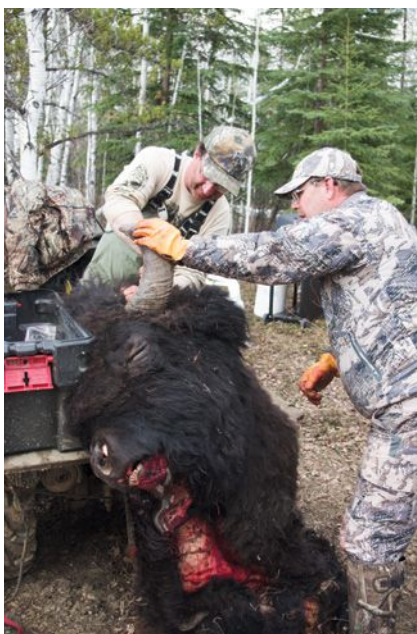
While looking for an opening in the trees to line up on the bull's vitals, he took off on a dead run. I leveled the Browning X-Bolt .375 H&H on the bull and tracked his movement in the Swarovski scope. When the bull cleared the last

aspen, I held the red dot on its heart and shot through a small opening in the trees.

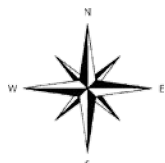
In the shuffle of trying to decide which way the bull was headed, the woods fell silent. I looked at McNeil and pointed at my ear, shaking my head, indicating I couldn't hear anything. We slowly walked to the clearing where I had shot at the bull, and to our surprise found him lying dead 30 yards from where I had shot at him. A Hornady 250-grain GMX Superformance bullet had done its job.

I couldn't believe I had taken a grand, old bull on the first morning of the hunt, and Kevin had watched it unfold. It all happened so fast.

It was a good thing there was plenty of daylight ahead. We couldn't budge the bull and had to use the three quads and winches to move it 15 yards into a clearing. It weighed well over 2,200 pounds and left us in awe of its body size. It was a privilege to take a wood bison on a true free-range hunt. They are about 30 percent larger than the plains bison and are long-term survivors in their northern wilderness.



The big bull sported a pair of massive horns with the tips rubbed and worn, helping to show its age.



HUNTING GEAR

Mossberg Patriot Bolt Action

Mossberg has been enthusiastically making bolt-action rifles for the better part of a decade now, with mixed reviews. So, the company set out to change that. The result is the Patriot, a synthesis of the best features of the 4x4 and ATR rifles with a few noteworthy revisions. Mossberg is rolling out the Patriot with a full line of more than 50 models in 11 calibers and 5 stock options, including both the Bantam youth and adjustable Super Bantam.

I recently had an opportunity to test one of the first Patriots off the production line. Being a hunter rather than a gun aficionado, the Patriot was evaluated more from the former perspective – looking for solid, reliable features that will perform in the field and on the range.

One important feature retained from previous models is a high-quality fluted, button-rifled (free-floating) barrel with a recessed crown that has a well-deserved reputation for accuracy. The rifle was set up for an “average guy,” including a Bushnell Legend Ultra-HD 3-9x 40mm



scope and Federal Premium 180-grain Nosler Partition ammunition. After three minor adjustments for windage and elevation, the rifle produced a .75-inch, three-shot group at 100 yards. That gave me all the confidence I needed to take the Patriot on a Saskatchewan deer hunt.

Also retained is Mossberg's pat-

ented adjustable Lightning Bolt Action (LBA) trigger. As someone occasionally susceptible to missing low with stiff-trigger rifles, I especially appreciated this trigger system. It's adjustable from 2 to 7 pounds, and the test sample was as light and crisp as a diet potato chip. I barely noticed it on the range and never felt it break in the field.

Having experienced mixed results with after-market metal magazines, I was also happy to see Mossberg keep the 4x4's polymer detachable box magazine (4+1 capacity standard, 3+1 magnum), which offers greater strength and durability with less weight – all important features to the hunter.

One new feature is an ergonomically redesigned bolt handle, partly a response to customer complaints that the previous version was easy to bump out of battery and did not

Mossberg Patriot Specifications

- Barrel: Free-floating, 22-inch (20-inch in Bantam/Super Bantam) button rifled, fluted (except .375 Ruger models) with a .625-inch diameter muzzle and recessed crown.
- Standard calibers: .22-250 Remington, .243 Winchester, 7mm-08 Remington, .308 Winchester, .25-06 Remington, .270 Winchester, .30-06, 7mm Remington Magnum, .300 and .338 Winchester Magnums, .375 Ruger. Bantam Calibers: .243, 7mm-08, .308.
- Stock: LOP 13¾-inch standard, 12-inch on Bantam; classic-style walnut, laminate and black synthetic.
- Overall length: 40.25 to 42.75 inches, model dependent.
- Weight: 6.75 to 7.5 pounds, model dependent.
- MSRP: \$386 to \$584, model dependent. Patriot Night Train (tactical version with scope, bipod), \$811.



offer sufficient clearance for shooters with a larger hand or when wearing gloves. Even an imperceptible lift of the bolt when reaching for the trigger could prevent the rifle from firing. I had no issues, even when dressed against the deep Saskatchewan cold.

Redesigning the bolt-handle

angle required a redesign of the stock, which also addressed criticism about aesthetics; previous models had been dubbed “clubby” or “utilitarian.” The Patriot has a classic stock design based on the Winchester Model 70. My synthetic version still looked a bit utilitarian, which is precisely what I want as a

hunter. Though it’s the same design, wood-stock models are quite attractive.

I did have one complaint that I hope Mossberg will address in the future. The Patriot is currently available in right-hand models only. I shoot left-handed. mossberg.com

– Bob Humphrey

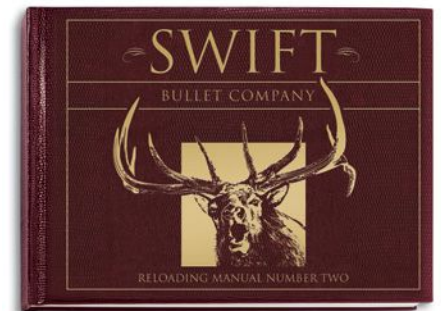
Swift Reloading Manual No. 2

Swift Bullet Company, manufacturer of premium hunting bullets, has published its *Swift Reloading Manual Number Two*. It provides hunters with a carefully researched, comprehensive and detailed reloading guide for its A-Frame and Scirocco II bullets.

The new manual has 475 pages of detailed handloading information and is beautifully illustrated. It contains load data for 86 cartridges and

hunting ballistics for each. It also has new powders from Hodgdon, IMR, Alliant and for the first time includes Vihtavuori and Norma powders for many popular foreign cartridges.

Developed by hunters with decades of field and reloading experience, it is handsomely stitch-bound to provide a striking addition to any handloader’s library. It can be found at many large retail stores



that carry handloading products. swiftbullets.com

Swarovski STR 80 Spotting Scope

The new Swarovski STR 80 spotting scope features HD optics and an illuminated reticle and can be used for estimating distance. The ergonomically designed scope offers an illuminated MOA or MRAD (milradian) reticle with 15 brightness levels; 10 daylight levels and 5 night levels. The reticle, which will get larger or smaller as magnification is adjusted, is extremely useful to help a shooter adjust shots in ¼ MOA or 0.10th MRAD increments at long range. The STR 80 can be used as a regular spotting scope as needed by allowing the reticle to be completely removed from view. Current eyepieces, 20-60x and 25-50xW (wide), can be used, adding to its versatility.

The HD optical system allows a shooter to identify, with high resolution, bullet holes in paper targets at long distances thanks to rich contrast and exceptional color fidelity. Complete with optimized specialty



coatings, SWARODUR, SWAROTOP and SWAROCLEAN, the STR 80 will also accommodate

three Picatinny rails and a winged eye cup (purchased separately).

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Mossberg 930 Convertible Shotguns

Two 12-gauge Model 930 autoloaders in high-capacity, 13-shot configuration now come with a five-shot conversion kit for multiple applications. These shotguns feature an extended magazine tube for special snow goose seasons and a beveled loading gate for quicker loading.

The five-shot conversion kit provides flexibility for situations where 13-round capacity (including one



shell in the chamber) is not appropriate for the game or season. The new shotguns come in matte black or Kryptec Yeti (winter/snow) Camouflage.

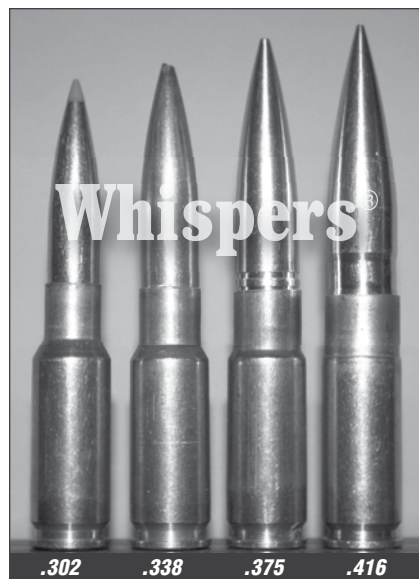
Both come with an extended magazine tube with barrel clamp, synthetic stock, Accu-Set choke

tubes, fiber optic front sight and include the five-shot conversion. Barrels are 28 inches with a vent rib, overall length is 52½ inches (13 rounds) or 48½ inches (five rounds), length of pull is 14 inches, and overall weight is listed at 8¼ pounds (13) or 7¾ pounds (five).

mossberg.com

Hunter's Guide to Classic African Cartridges

This new book contains more than 70 pages dedicated to the realistic use of cartridges for African big game, from the 7x57 Mauser to the 4 bore, all of which is condensed and to the point and is backed up with real-life experience by two expert hunters, Ganyana and Charlie Haley.



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A Wolfe Publishing contributing writer, Ganyana is the nom de plume of a firearms and ballistics expert actively involved in Zimbabwe's hunting industry. A former senior ecologist with the National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority with a doctorate in biology and a licensed professional hunter, his years spent in the field have resulted in volumes of data collected, which through the pages of *Rifle* and *Successful Hunter* magazine he has shared with interest and like-minded individuals for two decades.

Retiring after more than 20 years of service, police CID detective superintendent Charlie Haley was a former officer commanding the

Zimbabwe forensic ballistics laboratory and is widely regarded as one of the premier African experts on firearms. He currently serves on the committee of the Zimbabwe Shooting Sports Federation as chief instructor and is the chief training officer for the Zimbabwe Professional Hunter's and Guide's Association. He has written widely for *African Hunter* magazine over the past two decades.

africanhunteronline.com



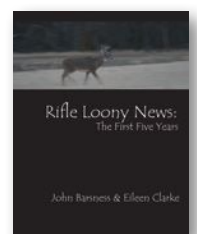
Rifle Loony News Compilation

When John Barsness and wife Eileen Clarke started writing "Rifle Looney News" (riflesandrecipes.com) five years ago, they agreed on two things: no advertising and always tell the truth. They have, whether testing scopes and binoculars, accurizing rifles, singing the praises of an honest gun or breaking down the myths of game care and cooking.

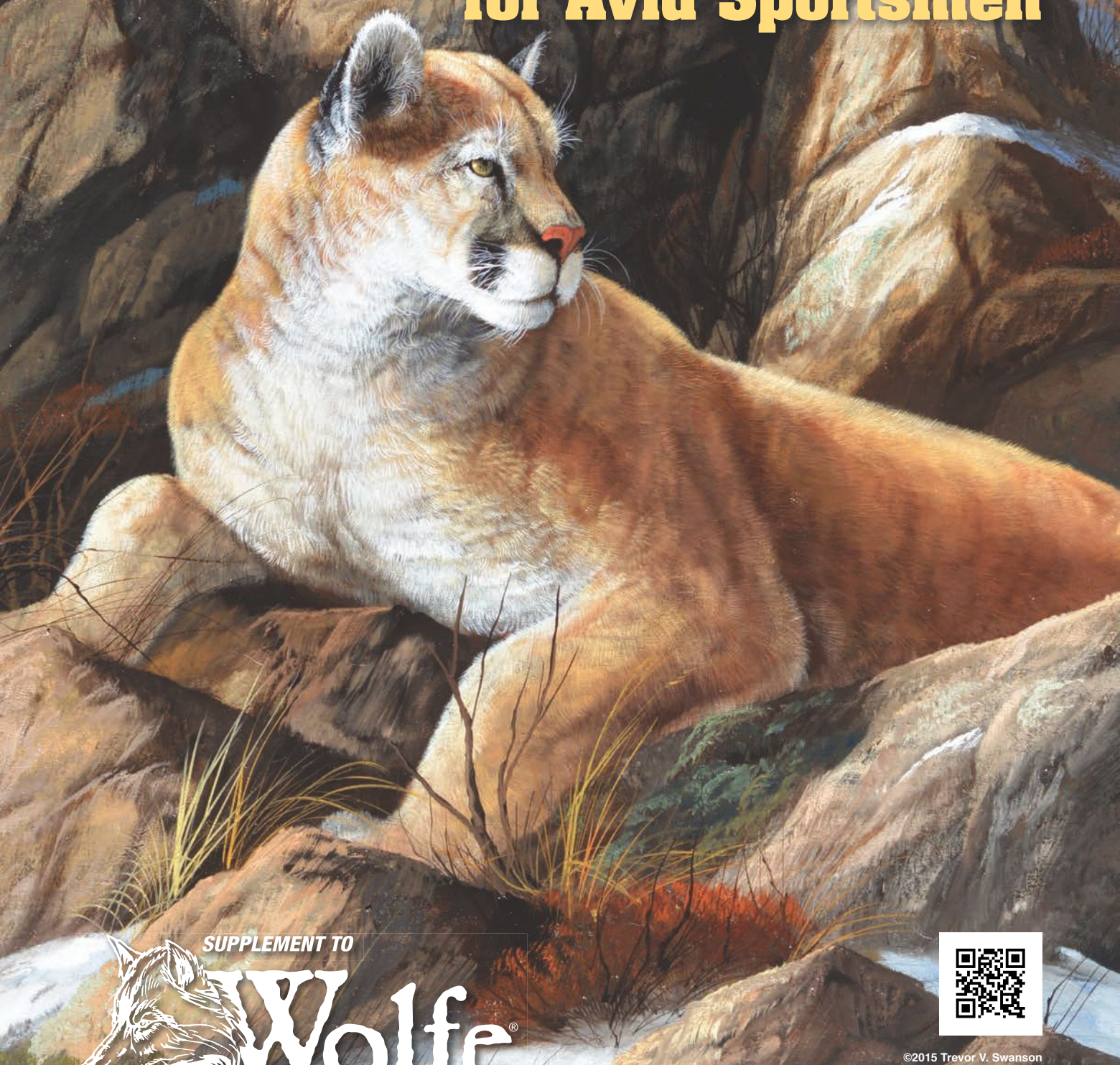
The newly published compilation *Rifle Looney News: The First Five Years* is a soft-cover version that includes 264 pages with color in-

serts and black-and-white photos throughout most of the book. It also includes some of Eileen's best game recipes and John's honest rifle and gear reporting. The compilation also provides a bit of a peak into the daily life of the couple, something that isn't found in their various magazine articles. Price is \$28.95 and includes shipping.

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What's New

In the Wild 2015 Wildlife Calendar

Featuring the artwork of Trevor V. Swanson

Acclaimed by critics and collectors alike, Trevor V. Swanson is one of the most gifted and promising wildlife artists in the world today. Coming from a long line of talented artists, Trevor is a brilliant example of inspired talent passing from one generation to another. This calendar features some of Trevor's best work gorgeously reproduced in this one of a kind wildlife calendar. This calendar covers January 2015 through January 2016 and includes 13 beautiful works of art.

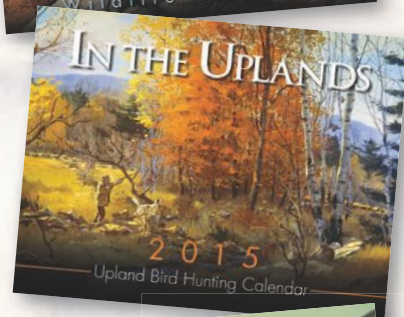
Catalog # 15CALENDAR **\$12.95**



In the Uplands 2015 Upland Bird Hunting Calendar

Start the New Year Off Right! Renowned wildlife artists Peter Corbin, Eldridge Hardie, Trevor Swanson and Brett James Smith along with The Upland Almanac have collaborated to produce the first edition of "In the Uplands" 2015 Upland Bird Hunting Calendar. This full-color, 8 1/2" x 11" calendar contains 13 months of outstanding images by these great artists. This is a limited edition publication. Order yours today!

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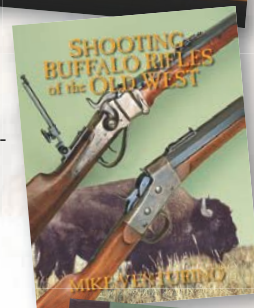


Shooting Buffalo Rifles of the Old West

Mike Venturino

The latest reprint of Mike Venturino's series on Old West firearms, evokes memories of these historic rifles, and the colorful characters who shot them, from a seminal period in our nation's past. The Springfields, Sharps, Remingtons, Ballards and Winchesters of the blackpowder era are detailed in 288 pages, including over 200 personal and archival photographs. Extensive information on the many cartridges used in these rifles as well as reloading data is included. Complete your collection of Venturino's classics by ordering today!

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William H. Claflin, Jr.

Presenting the two rarest ruffed grouse hunting books of all time! First published in 1934 and 1951 respectively, these books contain Mr. Claflin's reminiscences of hunting the wildest of all game birds, the ruffed grouse, in the northeastern United States during the early to mid-20th century. Both books, originally 32 and 65 pages respectively, have been compiled into one 100-page, hard-bound volume and are commercially available for the very first time. This exclusive American-made, limited and numbered edition features 22-karat gold stamping, gilded page edges, satin ribbon page marker, acid-free paper and a bonded leather spine. Only 250 numbered copies will be printed. Order yours today!

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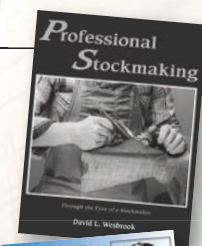
Gunsmithing

Professional Stockmaking

David L. Westbrook

A step-by-step "how to" with complete photographic support for every detail of the art of working wood into riflestocks. Comprehensive coverage of the techniques is illustrated to gain skill and/or understanding of the professional gunmaker's craft. An unparalleled achievement, destined to become the bible for students, professionals or those who appreciate custom rifles.

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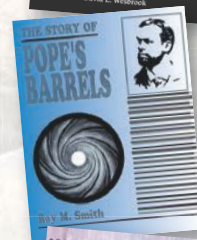


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Ray M. Smith

Pope's finest work was with muzzleloading, lead bullet, soft steel, low-velocity, single-shot rifles. This book captures his story and landmarks him as one of the greats of firearms development. A classic book of gunmaking history.

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Shooting

Sixguns by Keith

Elmer Keith

Elmer Keith's boyhood mentors were Indian fighters, vigilantes, lawmen and gun fighters of a passing frontier. In his lifetime, he was recognized as a great shot and the leading pistol authority in the land. *Sixguns* contains his experiences, findings, recommendations and instructions.

Catalog #579.1 HB **\$54.95**

Sam Colt's Own Record, 1847

Samuel Colt

Chronologically presented, the correspondence published in this volume completes the account of the manufacture in 1847 of the Walker Model Colt revolver. This book is a most unusual and rare look at firearms and early industrial history. This record has never been published before and is a must have for every history buff and lover of the revolver.

Catalog # 564.7 SB **\$24.50**

Modern Shotguns and Loads

Charles Askins

This classic covers shotguns and shooting techniques. History, ammunition, handloading and the principles and terms of wing-shooting are explained. The information is timeless.

Catalog # 571.5 HB **\$25.00**

The Muzzle-Loading Rifle ... Then and Now

Walter M. Cline

This extensive compilation about the muzzleloading rifle contains a cross section of the preserved data concerning the development of the "hallowed ole arms of the Southern highlands." History and gun knowledge not found so easily is yours in this vital resource.

Catalog # 567.8 HB ~~\$32.00~~ **ON SALE \$22.95**

Colt's Single Action Army

Dave Scovill

The Colt SAA is as popular today as it was in the past. This legendary revolver played an important role in the history of the American West. In this detailed volume, Editor Dave Scovill shares his knowledge of how to develop accurate loads for these fine guns and the skills needed to shoot them. From the original first-generation guns to the replicas that are available today, this book is the definitive source on reloading and shooting the Colt Peacemaker. This hard-bound edition contains 160 full-color photographs and is a worthy addition to any sportman's library.

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Shooting World War II Small Arms

Mike Venturino

Mike's new book will be one of the most comprehensive books available on WWII firearms. While most books cover the history behind the firearms and how they performed in battle, they stop there. Mike covers this plus shooting these old firearms today. He also has worked up reloading data for these firearms, some of which is only available in this book. If you love WWII era firearms or own one, this book will help you learn more about it and show you how you can shoot it today.

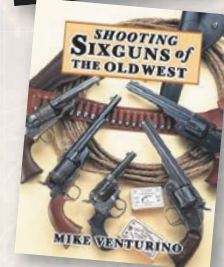
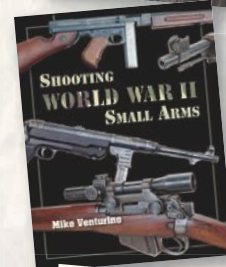
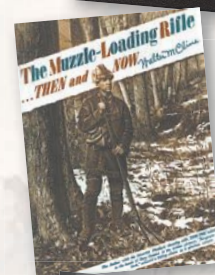
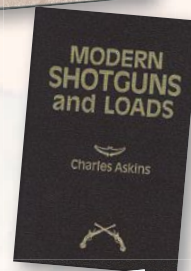
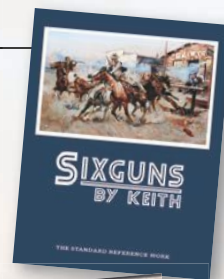
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Shooting Sixguns of the Old West

Mike Venturino

Considered in all its styles and calibers, more SAAs were made from 1873 to 1900 than any other single type of American revolver. However, it was not the only handgun about, nor was it the first revolver to take the then new metallic cartridges. From 1870, when the era of metallic cartridge firing sixguns began until 1900 which is generally considered the end of the Wild West, Colt, Remington, Smith and Wesson, Merwin & Hulbert, and a few other lesser known companies collectively produced hundreds of thousands of metallic cartridge firing sixguns. These handguns were at least of comparable quality to the Colt SAA, and some exceeded it by a wide margin. As far as actually shooting such guns, aside from the Colt Peacemaker, very few Old West sixguns have ever been put back into use. That has started to change, and this has probably come about from the enthusiasm generated by the great sport of cowboy action shooting.

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Pet Loads Complete Volume

Ken Waters

This is Ken's monumental lifetime work in the handloading field. More than just a reloading manual, this large, comprehensive book contains loading procedures, tables, tips, precautions and commentary; over 150 cartridges are detailed. No handloader's library is complete without this comprehensive book. This new updated book incorporates all supplements from #1-#24.

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Ken Waters' Notebook – "Best Wishes for Good Shooting" 1968-1989

Ken Waters

(Brand New Material Never Before Published)

Today's best authority on reloading and firearms reveals his unfathomable knowledge through this chronological catalog of letters. In the tradition of other great shooters' notebooks, this text of letters contains load data, little known facts, history, esoteric details and Ken's personal recommendations to various questions and concerns.

Ken was prolific in his correspondence with extensive details. None of these letters ever appeared in *Rifle* or *Handloader* magazines; it is all new material from the author.

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The Legacy of Lever Guns – Vol. I

This special edition from the folks at *Rifle* and *Handloader* magazines is devoted to America's favorite rifles. *The Legacy of Lever Guns* is a complete reference for loading and shooting lever actions! It is the most authoritative work on lever actions ever, including manufacture dates for various serial numbers. Marlin, Savage, Winchester, Browning and more are covered.

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These magazines represent a large compilation of the best reports on the subject of varmint guns and loads published in the pages of *Rifle* and *Handloader*. Our experts cover many popular calibers from .219 Zipper and .223 Remington to the .225 and .243 Winchesters and the 6mm-284 wildcat. Each cartridge is covered in great detail from bullet options, powder choices and handload recipes – more than 800 loads!

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Shooting Lever Guns of the Old West

Mike Venturino

300 pages detailing all pre-1900 models of Winchester and Marlin lever action rifles and carbines, plus reloading data on cartridges from the .25-20 to the .50-110.

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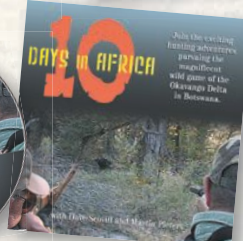
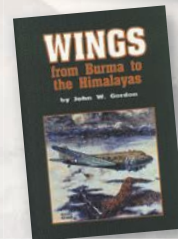
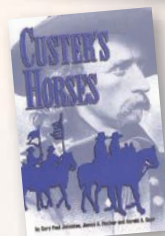
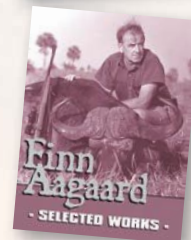
Hunting & Adventure

Trophies and Cartridges

Dave Scovill

This book offers the reader a potpourri of information on an unusual mix of subjects that is sure to help hunters and shooters. Bullet development, gunsmithing tips for your Colt handguns, thoughts on accuracy, trophy hunting, shooting techniques with iron sights, various rifle and caliber commentary for various game, leverguns, cast bullets and hunting tips are just a few of the topics covered. From the author's extensive experience as editor of *Rifle*, *Handloader* and *Successful Hunter* magazines, this book covers subjects usually not offered by other books, which is the purpose of this unique and valuable presentation.

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Finn Aagaard

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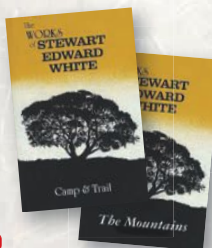
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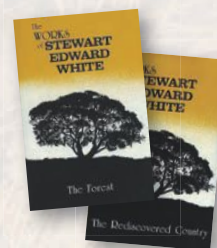


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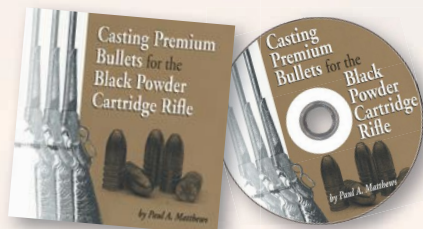
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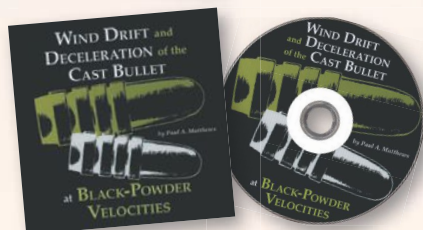


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Paul A. Matthews

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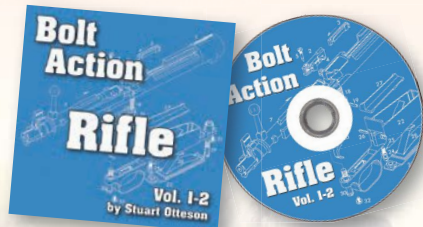


Wind Drift and Deceleration of the Cast Bullet at Black Powder Velocities - CD ROM

Paul A. Matthews

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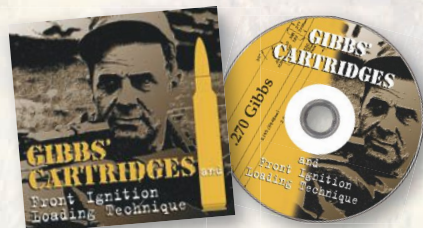


The Bolt Action Rifle I & II - CD ROM

Stuart Otteson

Author Stuart Otteson explores the original records and the bolt-action rifles themselves to reveal the fine nuances of many popular bolt-action mechanisms. The drawings exemplify the study; they were done by working from the guns, not factory drawings, old blueprints or catalogs. Few draftsmen have so clearly and economically delineated firearms mechanisms. The design facts collected and interpreted by Otteson are likewise his, taken directly from the guns. You will find in this book such things as lock times, spring rates and cam angles. There is also considerable historical content. Most of it is based on the record of patents, again personally researched by the author. For the modern actions, the historical recitation is based on the public record and on the recollections and statements of the men who did the design work.

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The Gibbs line of wildcat cartridges has aroused curiosity since the mid-1960s. Handloaders expound and argue the velocity claims and cartridge designs of Rocky Gibbs. Other than this book, only tidbits of information are available. Gibbs had developed his interest in handloading while a member of the Richmond, California, Rod and Gun Club. His competitive nature led to an intense desire to produce a cartridge that was bigger, better, faster and more complete than any other. He was severely criticized for his cartridge case design. Nearly everyone complained about the minimum length of the case necks. Gibbs was also accused of inflating the Gibbs cartridge velocities. He never gave in or broke down in the face of these ongoing controversies. He was willing to risk his reputation to prove he had maximized the available space in a .30-06 case. Whether he accomplished his goal of producing the finest cartridge available is up to each handloader to decide. When it comes to velocity, "a Gibbs chambered rifle with a standard barrel makes a magnum with a short barrel just another rifle."

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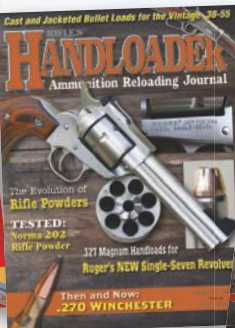
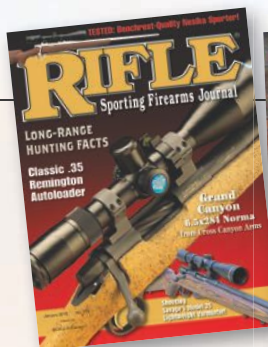
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Professor Colin Trotman

This book was published in the UK and mainly focuses on the Eurasian woodcock, a close relative to the American woodcock. Any hunter of woodcock in North America should find this to be an interesting read. It is a complete roughshooter's guide to a responsible approach to woodcock hunting. The author shares his opinions on the best types of guns, cartridges, gear for the sport and of course, the dogs.

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Dez Young

Dash (Hank's Dashing Bondhu), son of Hank, star of the television series "Hunting With Hank". This audio book traces Dash's life from puppyhood, through his training, to his travels with Dez Young across the country on television, hunting a wide variety of upland birds. Dash starred in the TV series called "Dash in the Uplands" (first called "Upland Days with Dez and Dash") This audio book is comprised of six CDs. All copies are autographed by Dez and also with Dash's paw print. Total run time: 5 hours

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Mark Parman

Like that earlier grouse hunter Aldo Leopold, Mark Parman takes to the woods when the aspens are smoky gold. Here, in an evocative almanac that chronicles the early season of the grouse hunt through its end in the snows of January, Parman follows his dog through the changing trees and foliage, thrills to the sudden flush of beating wings, and holds a bird in hand, thankful for the meal it will provide.

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Grouse Feathers, Again

Burton L. Spiller

In 1934, Mr. Burton Spiller wrote Grouse Feathers, followed by More Grouse Feathers in 1938. Both books quickly became upland classics. Now, more than 60 years later: Grouse Feathers, Again, a collection of twenty stories from the late Burton L. Spiller, the poet laureate of grouse hunting, that have never appeared in any of his previous anthologies is now available.

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Hunting the Quails of North America

Ben O. Williams

This is quintessential Ben O. Williams - taut, direct, suffused with earned knowledge, and permeated by a gentle humor. It is a joyous book, brimming with its author's love of life afield, and while easily the most useful guide extant on the subject of wingshooting North American quails, it is also far more than a how-to manual. Six species of quail are covered, exploring the bird's life cycle, and explaining how Williams hunts the bird.

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Shooting Sporting Clays

Mark Brannon & Tom Hanrahan

This is a great how-to book that teaches essential elements in the art of shooting sporting clays, one of the fastest growing shooting sports in North America today. Subjects covered include the 15 basic target types and strategies for breaking them; gun swing and speed for the 3 main swing types: swing-through, sustained lead, and pull-away; how to choose a pump gun, autoloader, side-by-side, or over-and-under; check weight, balance, and fit; and correct stance for the target speed and trajectory.

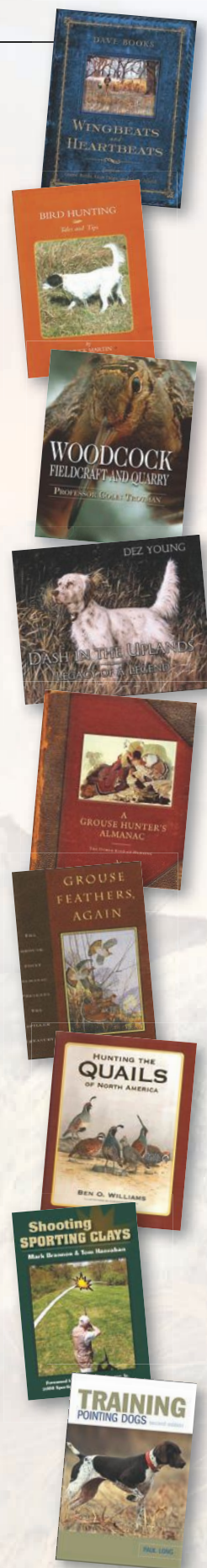
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Training Pointing Dogs

Paul Long

In Paul Long's heyday as a dog trainer, he was a true "guru" before anyone even used that word to describe an off-sought expert. "What does Paul Long say about this?" was the frequent refrain on training courses, and multiple answers were provided in the original edition of this book. Now reissued, Training Pointing Dogs again delivers the sage guidance of this master dog trainer. In simple question-and-answer format, Long addresses the questions most asked by trainers, professional and amateur alike.

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Upland Bird DVDs

My Boys...the best of Hank and Dash

Dez Young

This is a one disc compilation of Dez Young's favorite scenes from the TV shows "Hunting With Hank", "Upland Days with Dash and Dez" and "Dash in the Uplands" (same show, shorter title). He also included his favorite scenes from "Never, Ever Spoil Your Birddog!" at the end of the DVD.

Says Dez, "If you enjoyed watching my boys hunting birds across this great country (and beyond), I'm sure you'll enjoy seeing them again as they perform their job with such great enthusiasm and style."

Each copy is autographed by Dez Young. Run time: 75 minutes

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The Art of Shooting Flying - A Lesson in the Key Points of Instinctive Wingshooting

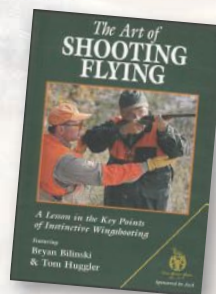
Bryan Bilinski and Tom Huggler

Bryan Bilinski, chief shooting instructor of FIELDSPORT Ltd. is one of America's foremost experts on the Robert Churchill method of instinctive wingshooting. Tom Huggler, a national authority on bird hunting, has written books and produced award-winning videotapes on grouse, quail, pheasant and woodcock. Learn with Tom as he discovers from Bilinski a modified version of how to shoot instinctively - both on the clay target range and in the field.

Dramatic hunting and shooting footage, state-of-the-art graphics and concise instruction - this 2-hour long production will make you a better wingshooter! Learn how proper stance, ready position, gun mount and target concentration merge; how your gun fit plays a major role in success; how to impact test your shotgun; how to identify eye dominance problems and other shooting concerns; why leading any target is the natural result of timing and gun momentum; measuring your shotgun stock and more.

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Upland Bird Hunting

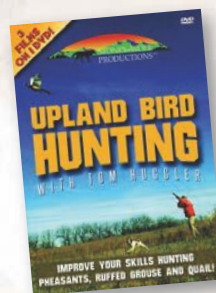
Tom Huggler

Join renowned upland bird hunting author Tom Huggler in this trilogy that will make you a better hunter of pheasants, quail and grouse!

Three upland bird hunting programs previously sold separately now available on one DVD. Learn bird hunting tips, habitat assessment and tactics for hunting pheasants, quail and grouse.

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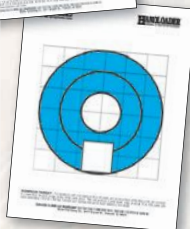
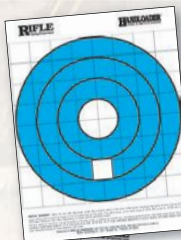
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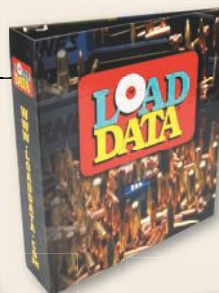
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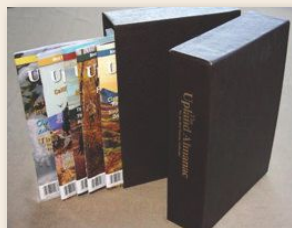
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LOADING BENCH

(Continued from page 17)

let weights available, I keep carrying the .25-06 Remington once big game season closes. On hikes after coyotes, mainly to keep the cobwebs of winter brushed away, Sierra 100-grain bullets starting at 3,300 fps or Nosler 85-grain Ballistic Tips at 3,400 fps carry the freight to coyotes clear across a sagebrush basin. To keep a practiced hand, the .25-06 Remington is carried along on walks during the spring and summer after ground squirrels and marmots. Sierra or Hornady 75-grain bullets at 3,600 fps provide a dead-straight trajectory to the varmints perched on a meadow's distant edge.

Recoil from those loads causes a loss of sight picture, however; and after 10 shots the barrel is hot enough to roast marshmallows, and the rising heat creates so much mirage crosshairs appear to dance around on the target. Plus, the variable scope on my rifle, turned all the way up to 8x, does not provide a close enough view to take full advantage of the flat trajectory.

The .25-06 Remington works well with reduced amounts of powder to lessen that recoil and barrel heat. Instead of filling cases full of IMR-4350 or H-414 to shoot 75-grain bullets at top speeds, lighter amounts of relatively faster burning powders provide much more pleasant loads to shoot. One good load for the .25-06 Remington is 42.0 grains of IMR-4320 that gives Hornady 75-grain V-MAX bullets a velocity of 3,032 fps from my rifle's 24-inch barrel. Another is 41.0 grains of H-4895 that fires Nosler 85-grain Ballistic Tips at 2,937 fps. These loads lessen recoil by half and ease barrel wear compared to full-tilt loads.

The .25-06's chief appeal is as a long-range, big-game cartridge. Accomplishing that requires filling cases with slow-burning powders to push 100- to 120-grain bullets at



A .25-06 Remington case nearly full of Hunter powder fires 100-grain bullets upwards of 3,400 fps.

top velocities. H-4831 has been a standard for decades. Newer powders include Hunter, Magnum, H-1000, IMR-7828, Retumbo and Reloder 17, 22 and 25. The .25-06 Remington will shoot 100-grain bullets upward of 3,400 fps. The load table shows similar velocity is reached with Reloder 17 and Barnes 100-grain Triple-Shocks and with Hunter when paired with Sierra 100-grain bullets.

The *Nosler Reloading Guide 7* lists a top velocity of 3,175 fps for 120-grain Partitions with 57.5 grains of Retumbo. My rifle matched that with Magnum powder and slightly exceeded it with Reloder 25. H-4831 was close behind. With velocities like these and rifles chambered by all major rifle manufacturers, the .25-06 Remington is certain to keep the .25-caliber popular for years to come.

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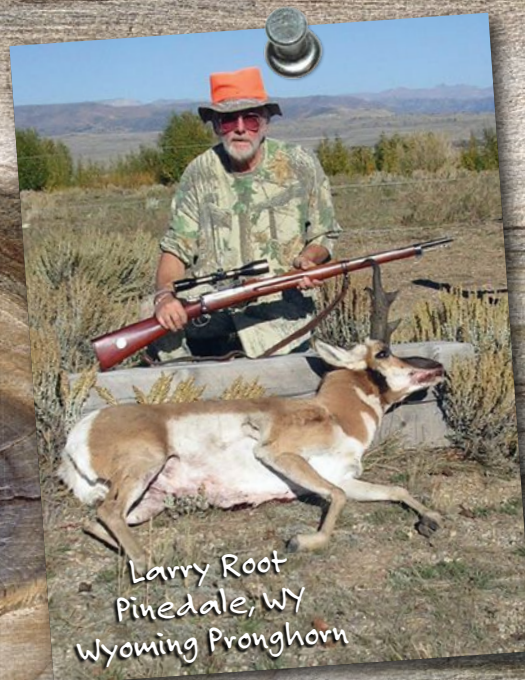
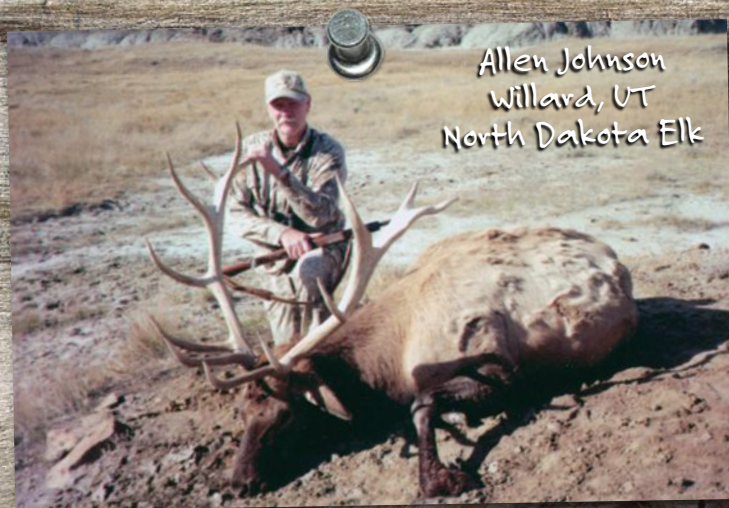
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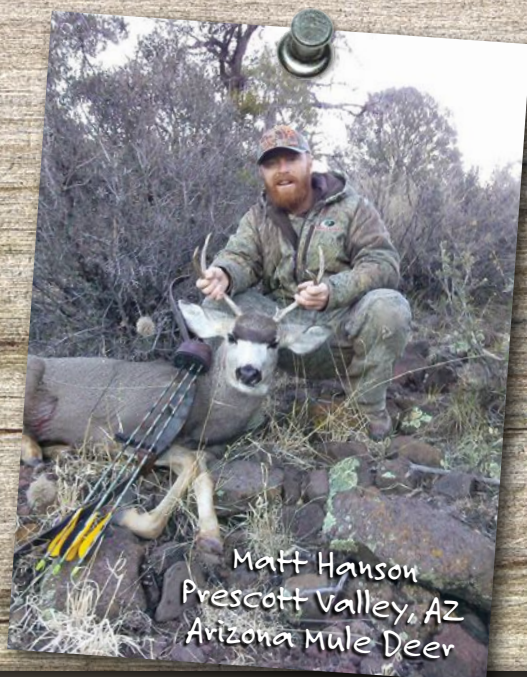
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PREDATOR & PREY

(Continued from page 11)



Open-reed calls are a little more difficult to master than closed-reed calls but produce a wider variety of sounds.

good chance of intercepting a fox as it circles. When hunting alone, an electronic caller with remote control is the ticket. Take a position downwind of the speaker. When hunting in hilly country, I set up about two-thirds the way up a hill, where – with an accurate rifle on a steady rest – I'm able to get the drop on those animals circling to catch my scent.

In northern climes, red foxes typically sleep out in the open and can be seen curled up in a ball on the downwind side of a hill, catching the warm afternoon rays. A good technique during the day is to drive around looking for these sleeping foxes. Once you find one, stalk in as close as you can, using available cover and keeping the wind in your favor, to get close enough for a setup. Call softly to the sleeping fox using the distress cries of rodents or birds.

If it needs a meal more than a nap, chances are good it will respond.

Proper Gear

Mouth-blown predator calls come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are relatively inexpensive, highly portable, easy to use and with a little practice will reproduce realistic prey distress screams. Owning several ensures a hunter can produce a wide variety of the prey sounds red foxes cannot resist. I prefer high-pitched, low-volume calls such as the distress cries of rodents and birds, but rabbit and hare calls work well, too.

For hunters who lack confidence in their ability to use mouth-blown calls, or want to benefit from a wide array of recorded animal sounds, electronic callers provide flexibility and adaptability and instill confidence in those new to the game. An e-caller is also a great training tool for newbies who want to learn how to use mouth calls. They can simply mimic the recorded animal sounds until they are proficient at making a variety of distress cries.

Try a variety of sounds until you find those that work consistently. I'll typically start with squealing birds, rodents or rabbit sounds at low volume and gradually crank it up if I don't get an immediate response. For a change-up, try the sounds of red fox pups in distress or territorial barks, which might be effective dur-

ing winter breeding. The key is to mix it up until you find something that works.

I've found that red foxes are sensitive to loud volume and that higher-pitched tones seem to appeal to their apprehensive nature. On a calm day, a fox will hear even the quietest rodent squeals from a quarter-mile away. I might use calls that produce more volume on windy days. Whether you're using mouth calls or an e-caller, always begin a setup using low volume in case a fox is close by, then add more volume if there is no immediate response.

Foxes are small, thin-skinned critters, rarely exceeding 10 pounds, and caliber and bullet choice should reflect their diminutive stature. Rifle cartridges ranging from the new .17 Winchester Super Magnum (rim-fire) to any of the Mighty Mouse centerfires up to .223 Remington pushing bullets designed for accuracy and quick expansion will work. I fit my fox rifles with extendible bipods, so I have a steady rest in the prone, sitting and kneeling positions. The terrain and cover will dictate which position will afford the best visibility. In open country, shooting from prone will offer the most stable rest for a precise shot at this small target. Variable power scopes that zoom from about 3x to 12x work best. A high-quality rifle-scope will capture those extra precious minutes just before sunup and just after sundown. Shotguns work great when hunting in tight cover – a cattail slough or brushy draw – where foxes like to hunt and hide out. No. 4 or No. 6 shot in a tightly choked 12 gauge is deadly and surprisingly gentle on the fur.

I highly doubt that Mr. Aesop was a fox hunter, but he sure seems to know a lot about their behavior. In that respect, he's found the key to successfully hunting them, and it doesn't really matter if the fabled fox is sly, shy or both.

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BACKCOUNTRY BOUND

(Continued from page 58)



Pronghorn are often hunted in warm weather. Extra diligence in cape care is required as blood can permeate the hollow hairs. Wipe it from the cape as quickly as possible.

“Heat and moisture are the enemies,” says Howe. “They both promote bacteria growth, which is what causes a cape to spoil.”

In extreme conditions, a deer cape can be damaged when the animal is thrown into the warm bed of a pickup for transportation. Having some means of keeping the body elevated from the metal surface (such as a couple of wood pallets) will promote air circulation and better preserve the cape.

In backcountry situations, heat and moisture management is the key to supplying a taxidermist with a quality cape. Most hunters prepare the trophy for transportation by skinning the cape from the front shoulders via a dorsal cut that follows the back of the neck to the base of the skull. The dorsal cut intersects another slice around the animal’s body behind the front shoulders. The head is then severed with the skinned portion of the cape attached.

“Ninety-nine percent of what I get is skinned to the back of the

head,” says Howe. If that’s the method employed for trophy transportation, he offers several pointers.

First, don’t skimp on hide. “I still see a lot of capes cut too short.” Cut a good six inches behind the shoulder and take care to leave a similar amount of hide on the brisket and sternum. When skinning the front legs, be sure to slit the hide behind the legs, not on the sides or front. “Follow the natural hairline on the back of the front leg,” says Howe. Also be aware of cooling the skull. “Leave the hide open at the back of the head for awhile to let heat escape. Bears and elk are really prone to damage if the hide is rolled up against the back of the skull too soon,” he cautions.

Unguided moose or elk hunters in remote locations might want to take their caping skills a step further. The ability to skin the cape from the head of the animal accomplishes a couple of things. It allows the antlers to be removed via the animal’s skull-plate, leaving the heavy bone of the head behind, thereby reducing packing weight. Done properly, it also avoids spoilage caused by warmth, moisture and insects. “Flies can be a real problem,” warns Howe. They often lodge around the eyes and nose. Removing the cape from the skull makes it possible to store it in a more insect-proof location and reduces its attraction as insect bait.

Skinning a cape from the skull is a job poorly relegated to last-minute, seat-of-the-pants instruction. “Practice is the key. I’m happy to have a customer come to the shop and work on skinning the hide from a skull I’m prepping for a European [skull] mount.” Howe also notes that hunters can hone their skills on game they’ve shot but don’t necessarily want to mount. The more familiar a hunter is with the process, the more efficiently and skillfully the chore can be handled in

the field. Howe also offers his clients a DVD that shows him skinning a mountain lion for a life-sized mount. Although different animals, the same basic process used to prep a big cat is similar to removing the cape from an ungulate.

How long can a cape survive without professional attention? Temperature is the key. “If it’s really warm,” says Howe, “you might only have a day or two, even if you do everything right. When it’s dipping below freezing at night, an animal caped to the back of the head can last a week if it’s cooled out properly and stored in the shade.” Once cooled, capes can be kept in game bags or burlap to thwart insects and dirt. A plastic bag is a poor storage option, as the material traps moisture and heat.

Non-iodized salt can be used to further preserve a cape in warm weather. Salt pulls moisture from the hide, “but doesn’t really do much good if you don’t skin the head.” Howe coaches hunters to remove as much flesh and fat from the cape as possible before applying salt. “Salt can penetrate some muscle, but doesn’t go through fat,” he advises.

Astute hunters put lots of time and effort into a backcountry trophy adventure in terms of mapping, scouting, tag research and physical preparation. If the goal is to hang a handsome trophy on the wall, learning the ins and outs of cape care is another needed skill.

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BACKCOUNTRY BOUND

Jack Ballard

Field Care: Trophy Prep

Drop a big bull elk or buck on a private ranch or other location where it can be retrieved with a vehicle, and it's easy to care for the trophy's cape. Just transport the animal to the taxidermist as quickly as possible and let him do the skinning. Shoot the same animal in the backcountry where the trek to civilization will be numbered in days rather than hours, and the equation isn't quite so simple. The cape may require some preservation, and it may be desirable to remove the skin from the animal's head to reduce weight. With these factors in mind, any hunter taking to the backcountry with the idea in mind of returning with a trophy for the wall is advised to "bone up" on the basics of cape care in advance.

"Even if you're going on an outfitted hunt, it's still your responsibility to see that a cape is cared for promptly and carefully," says Mitch Howe of Montana Wildlife Artistry in Billings, Montana. Mitch is a 40-year veteran of the taxidermy busi-



Leave plenty of hide behind the front shoulder on the cape. If this deer cape was intended for mounting, it should have been cut about 6 inches farther back.

ness. "Proper trophy care falls into the same category as proper meat care. Some pre-planning goes a long way."

No matter where you drop your trophy or how it's transported to

the taxidermist, a few cautionary statements are in order. First, be especially careful if you must drag an animal as part of the retrieval process. Pulling a carcass over rocks or stumps can easily strip hair from the front shoulders. Even on gentle terrain, a long drag can cause irreversible damage to hair and skin. There are some things a taxidermist can fix in relation to trophy care. Lost hair isn't one of them.

To avoid cape damage on a drag, skid the animal on a tarp or a plastic sled. In many places, these aids will not only protect the cape, but also make the drag easier as well. Also avoid wrapping a rope around the neck for pulling. Instead, attach it to the antlers above the bases. Oftentimes the portion of antler above the brow tines and below the first point is an ideal place to attach a rope. If using a pack animal, also be aware of rope placement as the cord can chafe hair from the cape if wrapped tightly around the head or other parts of the cape.

Blood can also damage a cape, creating stains that, once set, are virtually impossible to remove. For western hunters, blood is a particular problem with pronghorn, because their hair is hollow. Once blood penetrates the hair, it's like trying to clean the inside of a drinking straw with a dish rag. Carefully wipe blood from the cape as soon as possible. Use just enough water to remove the blood without saturating the cape. Antelope are also especially prone to hair slippage, a condition usually prompted by heat. Once patches of hair begin to loosen on a cape it's lost, making it imperative to cool antelope capes quickly.

(Continued on page 57)



Learning to remove the cape completely from the head is an invaluable skill; Jack caped this Nebraska whitetail as a demonstration for other hunters.



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